



UNION LOGISTICS
IN THE VICKSBURG CAMPAIGN

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

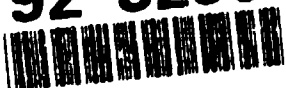
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ABSTRACT

UNION LOGISTICS IN THE VICKSBURG CAMPAIGN, by Major Mark S. Hurley, USA, 112 pages.

Historians have examined the tactical aspects of the Vicksburg campaign in great detail. Since hundreds of articles have already been written on the tactical conduct of the campaign, not much new information can be added to the body of knowledge that already exists. What is lacking in the analysis of the Vicksburg campaign is how it was logistically supported. This thesis analyzes how General Ulysses S. Grant supported the Army of the Tennessee during the campaign. This thesis also reviews the supply organization of the North, since it was this structure that kept Grant's army provisioned for nearly five months in Confederate territory.

The conclusion of this thesis differs from the widely held belief that Grant cut loose from his base of supplies right after he landed on the east bank of the Mississippi River. This thesis concludes that Grant was supplied throughout the campaign from supplies drawn from his bases at Milliken's Bend, Young's Point, and Grand Gulf.

Finally, this thesis provides supply tables for the Army of the Tennessee. These tables are provided for two reasons: first, to show the amount of supplies the Union army is believed to have required; and second, to illustrate the sheer size of the logistics effort of the Vicksburg campaign. No analysis of the campaign is complete without an understanding of this last point.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On New Year's day 1863 President Abraham Lincoln stood gazing out of his office window. The view from his office on the second floor of the White House was panoramic, a sweeping scene of the south lawn, the Potomac River, and the distant hills of Virginia. But Lincoln paid scant attention to the landscape before him. He was absorbed in the problems of a divided nation. The Union had suffered terribly over the past several months and the future held little encouragement.

Lincoln pondered many thoughts that day. Politically, the Union was in an uproar. His preliminary emancipation proclamation the previous autumn had set off a storm of controversy, especially in much of the lower North and Midwest. Although Lincoln's Republican supporters defended his proclamation as "indispensable for the salvation of the Union," the populace thought otherwise and dealt the Republican party a discouraging blow in the 1862 Congressional elections.¹

¹Several states that supported Lincoln in 1860 voted in Democratic majorities in the Congressional elections of 1862. Lincoln even lost his home district in Illinois to a Democrat. The election results showed the public's dissatisfaction with Lincoln and his administration. Stephen B. Oates, With Malice Toward None: The Life of Abraham Lincoln (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), 350.

The military situation fared even worse for the Union. Irritated by the lack of military activity in the West and East, Lincoln replaced two of his senior army commanders in the fall of 1862. In October Lincoln put William S. Rosecrans in charge of the Army of the Cumberland, replacing Don Carlos Buell, whose meticulous planning led to inactivity. In the following month Lincoln relieved George B. McClellan and placed Ambrose E. Burnside in charge of the Army of the Potomac. Lincoln hoped these changes would spur the military into action and deliver the Union some desperately needed victories. But his new generals failed to deliver. Instead of victories, the Union was handed a stinging defeat at Fredericksburg and a series of checks that looked almost as bad as defeat to an impatient public.²

The defeat at Fredericksburg proved disastrous for the Union. Burnside moved the Army of the Potomac to the Rappahannock and might have caused the Confederacy trouble if he had crossed the river at once. But the pontoon trains he needed to get to the opposite side had gone astray, and he waited until they were found. By the time his army crossed the river, the Confederates had entrenched themselves behind prepared positions. When Burnside launched his massive attack against the enemy, he suffered one of the worst defeats of the war. He threw division after division against the impregnable Confederate lines. With cannon and muskets

²Bruce Catton, The Civil War (New York: American Heritage, 1960), 266.

flashing, the enemy battle line cut the Army of the Potomac to pieces. Before long, the battlefield was covered with twelve thousand Union casualties. The ghastly fiasco incapacitated the Army of the Potomac for the rest of the winter and cost Burnside his command.

News from the Western theater was not good either. Late in December 1862, Rosecrans led his Army of the Cumberland out of Nashville to drive the Confederates out of middle Tennessee. But the Confederates struck first. Braxton Bragg's Army of the Tennessee fell on Rosecrans at Murfreesboro, catching some of the Federals still eating breakfast. The surprise and ferocity of the attack drove the Union right flank back. Confident of victory, Bragg telegraphed Richmond the good news of another Union defeat. But his assessment was premature. The Union line held. Two days later Bragg threw his right flank against the Union left. The Confederates charged across five hundred yards of open terrain, sustaining frightful casualties. That evening a dispirited Bragg withdrew his exhausted army and retreated back toward Chattanooga. Rosecrans immediately called the battle a Union victory, and Lincoln was very much relieved that another disaster was averted. The victory, however, was not a crucial one. Since Rosecrans did not advance after Bragg when the latter withdrew, the Confederates retained control of south-central and eastern Tennessee. With both armies immobilized by enormous casualties, operations in the theater ground to a halt.

Grant was not having any better luck than Burnside or Rosecrans. Having started out with the most promise, Grant's Army of the Tennessee advanced down the railroad line connecting Holly Springs and Jackson, Mississippi. Grant's concept of operations was to send his most trusted subordinate, General William T. Sherman, down the Mississippi River with a force to land a few miles above Vicksburg.³ Grant hoped to fix the main force of Vicksburg south of the Yalobusha River while Sherman maneuvered around the city's flank. But Grant's plans were frustrated by Confederate Generals Earl Van Dorn and Nathan Bedford Forrest. On December 20, 1862, the Confederates swung in behind Grant's army, destroying supplies and ripping up railroads. Van Dorn struck at Grant's secondary base of supplies at Holly Springs, capturing the garrison of fifteen hundred men and destroying ammunition, food, and forage.⁴ At the same time, Forrest rode into western Tennessee, damaging the railroads and telegraph lines in the Federal rear. Forrest's raid caused enough confusion and disorganization to cut Grant off from all communication with the north for more than a week. It would be more than two weeks before Grant could issue full rations to his army in the normal way. The raids compelled Grant's army to subsist off the land as it fell back to Tennessee.

³Ulysses S. Grant, The Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant (New York: Library Classics of America, 1990), 288.

⁴Ibid., 289.

Grant's withdrawal left Sherman, who was then on his way down the Mississippi with a force to strike Vicksburg, with a big problem. The Confederate army that Grant intended to hold in place was now free to reinforce Vicksburg. On December 29, 1862, Sherman attacked across Chickasaw Bayou, about four miles north of Vicksburg. With parts of his force caught in a vicious enemy cross fire, Sherman's assault was decisively repulsed. Strong Confederate positions and poor weather dissuaded Sherman of attempting any further attacks.

Sherman learned of the capture of Holly Springs and of Grant's inability to support him only after the assault at Chickasaw Bayou failed. Without Grant's assistance, the expedition had no chance of success and was called off.⁵

The Holly Springs and Chickasaw Bayou incidents exasperated the North. This recent poor showing of the Federal army, and in particular its leadership, had even the staunchest Union supporters predicting the demise of the Union. The Confederate army had outfought and outmarched the North in every engagement. For the nation to survive intact, military victories were needed. Nothing else would arrest the erosion of public will.

By Independence Day 1863, Union and Confederate fortunes had changed. Federal victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg boosted Northern morale while stunning the Confederacy. At Gettysburg the Army of the Potomac stopped

⁵William T. Sherman, Memoirs of Willaim T. Sherman (The Library of America: New York, 1990) 312-17.

Potomac stopped Robert E. Lee's invasion of the North. Lee lost one-quarter of his command, much of it irreplaceable. In the West, Grant was concluding the surrender of Vicksburg with General Pemberton, the commander of the beleaguered Confederate garrison. After a series of fruitless attempts to gain a foothold from which to attack the city, Grant finally ran the garrison's shore batteries, marched his army inland, won five straight battles, and drove to the outskirts of the city. Vicksburg capitulated after a seven-week siege.

Of all the campaigns in the Civil War, Vicksburg was one of the most important. The campaign cost the Confederates forty thousand men, a loss the South could ill afford. Vicksburg was one of the last two Confederate citadels guarding the Mississippi. Along with the capture of Port Hudson, the last Confederate fortification along the Mississippi, the surrender of Vicksburg gave the Union control of the entire river and split the Confederacy in two. The Union victory convinced foreign powers, such as England, to remain neutral.

The most significant event of the Vicksburg campaign happened in Washington, D.C., where the President was closely following the movements of Grant's army. Lincoln wanted Grant to link up with Nathaniel Banks, who was then operating in Louisiana. Working together, both forces would pose a strong threat to Vicksburg from the south. But Grant intended to campaign with the forces he had. Lincoln believed this to be a mistake, but he did not intervene. He

admired Grant's daring and appreciated his fighting spirit, a spirit that never balked at attacking the enemy.

When Vicksburg surrendered, Lincoln could scarcely conceal his admiration for Grant. He sent the general a personal note of thanks, congratulating him for the brilliant campaign. Lincoln personally apologized to Grant because the general's tactics were right while his were wrong.⁶ The victory engendered mutual admiration, respect, and trust between the President and Grant, which lasted throughout the remainder of the war. In March 1864, Lincoln placed Grant in charge of all the Union armies. It was Grant's strategy of fighting on all fronts that finally forced the Confederacy to surrender.

Historians have long credited Grant's handling of logistics as a significant factor of the Vicksburg campaign. Many accounts tell of Grant abandoning his supply lines and subsisting off the country while marching inland. The implication is that Grant's success was largely due to the absence of lengthy lines of communication. Stephen B. Oates, the distinguished Lincoln biographer, stated that "Grant stormed northeast . . . subsisting entirely off hostile country."⁷ Dr. James A. Houston, a noted author and logistician, described Grant as issuing only five days' of rations, not experiencing any noticeable supply shortages

⁶Oates, With Malice Toward None, 383.

⁷Ibid., 393.

during the march inland, and saving manpower by freeing himself from his supply lines.⁸ Years after the campaign, Grant himself stated that he "determined to move independently of Banks, cut loose from my base, destroy the rebel force in rear of Vicksburg, and . . . capture the city."⁹ Both General Grant and historians have portrayed the Vicksburg campaign as a highly mobile one, with Union forces operating in enemy territory without supply lines or lines of communication, an army completely cut off from outside contact.

But is this what really happened? Using primary accounts, this thesis will examine the logistics of the Vicksburg campaign. It will specifically show that Grant did not subsist entirely off the land. He supplied his army with at least partial rations throughout most of the campaign. It will also prove Grant's army was issued more than five days' of rations. As the Army of the Tennessee marched inland, wagon trains resupplied the army at least three times. On two occasions the army received at least five days' of supply. Finally, Grant's own account of the logistics of the Vicksburg campaign is not entirely correct. Grant stated as early as May 3 he decided to cut loose from his base. Grant could not have decided to cut loose this early since he

⁸James A. Huston, The Sinews of War: Army Logistics 1775-1953 (Washington, D.C.: The Center of Military History United States Army, 1966), 231.

⁹Grant, Memoirs, 328.

himself was not sure how the campaign would proceed at this point. Campaign accounts also show that Grant was connected to his base of supplies throughout the entire operation. He resupplied himself with supplies brought up from Grand Gulf after the battles at Raymond, Champion Hill, and Big Black. Grant reopened a new line to his supply base on May 19 once his army had arrived on the outskirts of Vicksburg.

CHAPTER 2

NORTHERN LOGISTICS

Many historians agree that the vast resources of the North made a major contribution to Grant's victory at Vicksburg. Without these resources, Grant would not have been able to maintain his army deep in the South for as long as he did. The large Union depots at St. Louis and Memphis kept the Army of the Tennessee well-supplied, shipping thousands of tons of supplies down river by steamboat. All the great materiel factors of war--manpower, industry, transportation, and organization--were on the side of the North.

The North had a larger reserve of manpower from which to draw its army than the South. When the Southern states ceded from the Union in 1861, twenty-three states remained in the North, with a population of twenty-two million. In contrast, the Confederacy had only eleven states, with a population of nine million, of whom one-third were slaves.¹

The North took the additional step of recruiting emancipated slaves into all-black regiments, which added 180,000 soldiers to the Union armed forces. During the

¹Richard N. Current et. al., American History: A Survey, 7th ed., (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 4.

Vicksburg campaign, Grant apparently settled the issue of arming blacks in his own mind, having decided to use them to protect his supply base at Milliken's Bend and Young's Point. He understood that every man taken from the South weakened the enemy, while it strengthened the North.

The North used its superior manpower reserve in a strategy of attrition to wear down the South. By the end of the war this strategy had exhausted the Confederacy of able-bodied soldiers. Upon reaching the Confederate trenches at Petersburg, a Union soldier commented that he found among the dead "old men with silver locks . . . side by side with mere boys of thirteen and fourteen."² During Robert E. Lee's last attempt to break through the Union army near the Appomattox Courthouse, one of his divisions had just 250 men left. In one brigade only eight men remained. Northern manpower had overwhelmed the South.

Like its manpower, Northern industrial production was far greater than that of the South. Although importing much of its war materiel from foreigners during the first year of the war, the Union was able to manufacture most of what it needed after 1862. The Confederacy, on the other hand, relied heavily on imports throughout the war. The South was badly hurt when Union diplomatic pressure forced England, the Confederacy's major supplier of war goods, to enforce trade embargoes. Though the South's agricultural economy was still

²Geoffrey C. Ward et al., The Civil War (New York: Knopf Inc., 1990), 366.

producing large amounts of cotton, its industrial base was not able to turn the raw materials into finished military products. Consequently, the South was not able to provide its soldiers with adequate clothing, boots, or blankets. The Confederate soldier often relied on captured Union supplies for these necessities.

The transportation system of the North was in every respect superior to that of the South.³ The North had rapidly expanded the quantity and quality of its railroads in the decade preceding the war, connecting ports, cities, industries, and markets together. The South, however, had fallen far behind. Though having roughly the same land mass as the North, the South had only one-half of the North's total mileage of railways. Most these railways linked port cities with cotton-producing regions. Connections between strategically important cities were virtually nonexistent. This fact was not lost upon General Grant in the Vicksburg campaign. By cutting the only railroad connection Vicksburg had, he effectively isolated the city from reinforcements and supplies. The advantage the North had over the South in transportation was great enough to counterbalance whatever advantage the Confederacy had in interior lines.

The responsibility for transforming the vast resources of the North into usable military goods fell to the War Department. The expansion of the Union army throughout

³Huston, Sinews of War, 198.

the war illustrated the enormous task the War Department had. In 1860 the United States Army numbered 16,215 soldiers. By the end of 1861 the Army had expanded to 186,846 soldiers, over a thousand percent increase. Two years later the Army's strength stood at 918,354. When the war ended, the Army numbered over one million.⁴ To feed, clothe, equip, and pay the Army, the War Department spent over \$2 million each day and a total of \$1 billion in the final year of the war. To meet the demands placed on it by a rapidly expanding army, the War Department grew in size and reorganized itself many times.

The War Department was divided into ten different departments. The logistic support of the Union army was the responsibility of the four supply departments: the Quartermaster General, who took care of clothing, equipment, forage, animals, transportation, and housing; the Commissary General of Subsistence, who was responsible for rations; the Chief of Ordnance, who procured and distributed ammunition and weapons, and the Medical Department, which oversaw medical supplies and the evacuation, treatment, and hospitalization of the wounded.

The bureau chiefs of the departments worked for the Secretary of War. This arrangement had the benefit of giving the Secretary direct access to the technical expertise of his department chiefs. But the arrangement also had the

⁴Russell F. Weigley, History of the United States Army (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984), 598.

unfortunate effect of making his department heads feel accountable only to the Secretary himself. As a result, the War Department and the armies in the field rarely exchanged plans with each other. The lack of coordination between the two often hindered operations. This was clearly the case when on very short notice Grant ordered thirty small-class steamboats for his Yazoo Pass expedition from the quartermaster depot at St. Louis. The chief quartermaster officer at St. Louis had no such steamboats on hand, having sent them to the Army of the Ohio. Despite a situation where correlations between strategy and logistics remained vague, the War Department proved efficient enough to meet much of the army's needs, though not always on time.

Responsibilities for Army procurement and distribution of supplies lay primarily with the four departments mentioned earlier. Each supply department procured items along the commodity lines it was responsible for: the Ordnance Department provided arms and ammunition; the Quartermaster Department furnished clothing; the Medical Department issued hospital supplies and bedding. When commodity lines did not neatly divide, such as with horses for the artillery, procurement responsibility was decided on the item's ultimate destination or use. The Quartermaster Department picked up the additional task of transporting the supplies of other departments.⁵

⁵Huston, Sinews of War, 169.

The amount of supplies procured, stored, issued, and transported by the Quartermaster's Department showed that it maintained a high level of support for the Union army. The large Quartermaster depot in St. Louis, which supplied Grant's army during the Vicksburg campaign, serves as an example. Department reports show that the chief quartermaster of the depot received almost \$23 million between June 30, 1862 and June 30, 1863. During the same time, he paid \$20 million on 48,092 vouchers for military goods and services. To move the supplies to the armies in the field, he paid \$2 million for river transportation and nearly \$1 million for railroad transportation. Table 1 shows a sample of the military equipment received and issued from the depot at St. Louis.⁶

Table 1.--Extract of Supplies Received and Issued at St. Louis between June 30, 1862 and June 30, 1863

Item	Received	Issued	Item	Received	Issued
Horses...	76,489	55,301	Saddles.....	6,380	5,215
Mules....	45,705	32,878	Ambulances..	746	659
Oxen.....	1,559	238	Barges.....	115	115
Wagons...	6,869	5,567	Ferry Boats.	3	3

The depot at St. Louis contracted a large amount of river and land transportation to ship these supplies to the various armies it was responsible for. Captain Charles

⁶Quartermaster General, Annual Reports of Quartermaster Officers, 1863, vol. I, Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 41-73.

Parsons, a Quartermaster officer working in the St. Louis transportation office, reported that he was responsible for all movements of troops, stores, and animals from the depot. Table 2 shows the items he shipped from St. Louis.⁷

Table 2.--Troops, Stores, and Animals Shipped from the St. Louis depot between June 30, 1862 and June 30, 1863

Item	Land	River	Total
Men No.....	193,020	135,909	328,932
Subsistence, ordnance, & medical stores lbs...	153,102,100	337,912,363	491,014,463
Horses and mules.....	47,963	34,718	82,681
Cattle.....	2,196	23,353	25,549
Wagons & ambulances.....	1,873	2,475	4,348
Cannon & caissons.....	196	78	274
Locomotives & R.R. cars.	179	0	179
Lumber, feet.....	2,314,619	0	2,314,619

In procuring the uniforms, shoes, tents, horses, mules, forage, and wagons for the Union army, the Quartermaster Department consumed one-half the output of all Northern industry.⁸

The main purpose of the Ordnance Department was to provide all ordnance and ordnance stores to the armed forces. This was a formidable task as the Ordnance Department operated twenty-eight arsenals, foundries, and

⁷Quartermaster General, Annual Reports of Quartermaster Officers, 1863, vol. IV, Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 551-615.

⁸Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, How the North Won. A Military History of the Civil War (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 139.

armories. Between 1861 and 1862, Union arsenals produced 7,892 pieces of artillery, 4 million stand of arms, and five million rounds of artillery ammunition. The arsenals also produced over 100 million rounds of small arms ammunition over the course of the war.⁹

Along with furnishing ordnance materiel to the army, the Ordnance Department had the responsibility of testing and accepting new weapons into the army's inventory. During the Civil War, the Department adopted a conservative policy toward accepting new technology and has often been criticized for it. The Chief of Ordnance defended his department's conservatism by reasoning that the introduction of new weapons would have meant major retooling for the arsenals. Retooling the arsenals would have decreased the production of the rifled musket, the standard firearm of the Union army.

The Commissary Department had the task of providing rations for the army. The official ration of the Union army is found in Table 3.

Table 3.--The Official 1861 Army Ration per para. 1191, Revised United States Army Regulations of 1861

Item	Weight	Item	Weight
Salted or fresh beef..	20 oz	Rice.....	1.6 oz
or pork bacon.....	12 oz	Coffee.....	1.6 oz
Flour.....	18 oz	Sugar.....	2.4 oz
or corn meal.....	20 oz	Salt.....	.54 oz

⁹Jay Luvaas and Harold Nelson eds., The U.S. Army War College Guide to the Battle of Antietam (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 263.

Whenever possible, the Commissary Department supplemented this ration with fresh vegetables. If fresh vegetables could not be found, the Department issued desiccated potatoes or vegetables. The Union soldier was considered the best fed soldier of the time. His ration was almost double that of the French, more than double that of the Prussian, Austrian, and Russian, and twenty percent more than British.¹⁰

Initially, the Medical Bureau of the War Department was the least able to mobilize the support it needed to cope with an expanding army. In the early battles of the war, medical care in the United States Army had not progressed much past that provided in the Revolutionary War. In 1864 Congress approved a reform bill which enabled the department to introduce more effective measures for the treatment of soldiers. The measures included changes in the ambulance system, the field hospital system, and the medical supply system. These reforms eventually became the model upon which the medical services of other armies patterned themselves.

The establishment of a separate ambulance corps was a big step toward improving the evacuation system. Prior to separate ambulances, surgeons had to depend on the Quartermaster's Department for transporting casualties. These arrangements proved unsatisfactory as surgeons competed against quartermaster and commissary priorities. Reforms in

¹⁰Huston, Sinews of War, 185.

the system authorized separate wagons, drivers, and attendants for the ambulance corps. In the Army of the Tennessee Grant had already provided separate wagons for ambulances prior to the statutory reforms of 1864. Each regiment had two ambulances assigned to it. The army's movement orders frequently addressed the location of the ambulances during marches, which was normally with their regiments.

The War Department served an important function for the Union army. It was the conduit through which the Union's vast reservoir of resources flowed to the armies in the field. The War Department prepared budgets, managed contracts, inspected the quality of goods and services, stored war materiel, and issued supplies to the field armies. Although the War Department was far from perfect, no other nation could match its record for organizing and equipping so large an army.

The resources of a nation are useless to a soldier unless they reach him. To bridge the gap between strategic and tactical levels of supply, army commanders used an intermediate system of bases, secondary bases, advanced depots, and temporary depots.

For operations in the field, an army often established a base from which to draw supplies. The base was a large depot remote enough from the battlefield to be secure from hostile actions but close enough to the army to support its needs. An army's base drew its supplies from the

Quartermaster depots run by the War Department. Grant's base of supplies received its support from the depot in St. Louis.

An important feature of an army base was its proximity to transportation. Army commanders selected the location of their bases as to have access to railroads, rivers, or both. Early in the Vicksburg campaign Grant selected Columbus, Kentucky, as his initial base of supplies. The town was suitably located on the Mississippi River and was connected to several other cities by rail.¹¹

For extended campaigns a commander would often create a secondary base in order to move supplies closer to his army. Secondary bases were used when operating with extended lines of communication. Grant established a secondary base at Holly Springs, Mississippi, in December 1862. His purpose for a secondary base was to reduce the line of communication between his base at Columbus and his army, 150 miles away. Commanders attached great importance to their secondary bases. When Confederate raiders destroyed Grant's secondary base at Holly Springs, the loss was significant enough to cause him to alter his tactical plans.¹²

Supplies were shipped from secondary bases to advanced depots. Advanced depots allowed the army to draw supplies without having to go all the way back to its base for them. These depots could be turned into secondary bases

¹¹Grant, Memoirs, 286.

¹²Ibid., 289.

if warranted. In the Vicksburg campaign, areas along the west bank of the Mississippi River, such as Young's Point, Milliken's Bend, and Lake Providence, initially served as temporary depots but soon grew into secondary bases. Young's Point and Milliken's Bend eventually resembled military cities, with repair shops, supply centers, and semipermanent garrisons. At Lake Providence the Union army permanently stationed a garrison there to protect the plantation workers who processed cotton for Northern mills.

As a rule an army tried to keep within one hundred miles of its advanced depot. An army would shift its advanced depot to a new location in order for the depot to remain within supporting distance. Despite the great distances the Army of the Tennessee marched during the Vicksburg campaign, Grant did not violate the hundred-mile rule. Table 4 shows how Grant moved his depot to new locations to support his army.

Table 4.--Distance between the Army of the Tennessee and its advanced depot between April 27 and May 20, 1863

Date	Location of Advanced Depot	Location of Army Vanguard	Distance
April 27.....	Milliken's Bend	Perkin's Plantation	40 miles
April 30.....	Milliken's Bend	Bruinsburg	50 miles
May 1.....	Milliken's Bend	Port Gibson	63 miles
May 6.....	Grand Gulf	Rocky Springs	18 miles
May 12.....	Grand Gulf	Raymond	45 miles
May 14.....	Grand Gulf	Jackson	60 miles
May 16.....	Grand Gulf	Edwards Station	40 miles
May 20.....	Chickasaw Bayou and Warrenton	Vicksburg	2 miles 5 miles

Wagons connected an army's advanced depot to the units in the field and were distributed from corps down to battery. The wagons authorized for each type of unit changed several times throughout the course of the war. The trend was to decrease the amount of wagons in order to increase mobility. From his experience at Vicksburg Grant limited the transportation allowances of the Union army in 1864. General supply trains received seven subsistence and forage wagons for each one thousand men, fifty forage wagons for each cavalry division, four subsistence and forage wagons for every artillery battery, and three hospital supply wagons for each brigade. He also reduced the baggage trains of each corps, division, and brigade headquarters to three, two, and one respectively. Ammunition wagons were prohibited from carrying anything but ordnance.¹³

The organization and operation of wagon trains developed efficiently as the war progressed. Regimental trains consisting of ammunition, ambulance, and subsistence wagons followed their units. The general supply trains were organized at the division level and controlled by the division's quartermaster officer. The division also had an ordnance train which carried the reserve ammunition. This train fell under the control of division ordnance officer. The tactical situation dictated how the supply trains moved. Normally, they marched at the rear of the division with the

¹³Huston, Sinew of War, 216-17.

ammunition trains in front for ready access.¹⁴ Sometimes division trains were grouped and moved by corps. On the approach march to Vicksburg, each of Grant's corps commanders massed his wagons in order to keep them out of the way of the combat troops.

Regimental quartermaster, commissary, and ordnance officers were responsible for the supplies of their units. They received supplies through supply point distribution, a method of resupply in which the receiving unit is issued supplies from a distribution point and moves the supplies in organic transportation.¹⁵ The regimental quartermaster officer submitted requests for all quartermaster supplies and transportation and accounted for all regimental quartermaster property. This property included tents, camp equipment, forage, animals, and wagons. He also managed the movement of the regiment's supply wagons. The regimental commissary officer requested, accounted for, and issued rations to the soldiers. The regimental ordnance officer requested, accounted for, and issued arms, ammunition, and other ordnance materiel to the unit. He managed the movement of the unit's ordnance wagons. These officers didn't receive any special logistical training. They were line officers selected as Lieutenant Grant was during the Mexican War.

¹⁴Luvaas and Nelson, Antietam, 274.

¹⁵Headquarters, Department of the Army, FM 63-2 Combat Service Support Operations (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1987), 5-2.

Under ideal conditions, the typical army wagon with six-mule team could haul 4,000 pounds. In the Vicksburg campaign the typical load was reported as 2,000 pounds. Sometimes wagon loads reached as high as 3,200 pounds, while at other times the loads dropped as low as 900 pounds. When short wagons, the Army of the Tennessee used mules, which could carry three hundred pounds apiece. Captain G.L. Fort, a quartermaster officer at Memphis, refitted the Army of the Tennessee with 5,127 horses and 3,739 mules.¹⁶ Table 5 shows the amount of supplies these animals could hypothetically haul if organized into teams.¹⁷

Table 5.--Amount of Supplies hauled by Wagons from Advanced Depots to the Army of the Tennessee between April 27 and May 20, 1863

Date	Location of Advanced Depot	Location of Army Vanguard	Distance in miles	Supplies Hauled lb
April 27..	Milliken's Bend	Perkin's	40	2,494,301
April 30..	Milliken's Bend	Bruinsburg	50	2,263,785
May 1.....	Milliken's Bend	Port Gibson	63	2,263,785
May 6.....	Grand Gulf	Rocky Springs	18	2,724,817
May 12....	Grand Gulf	Raymond	45	2,494,301
May 14....	Grand Gulf	Jackson	60	2,263,785
May 16....	Grand Gulf	Edwards Station	40	2,494,301
May 20....	Chickasaw Bayou and Warrenton	Vicksburg	2	2,724,817
			5	2,724,817

¹⁶Quartermaster General, Annual Reports of Quartermaster Officers, 1863, vol. II, Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 521-33.

¹⁷Based on 8,866 animals organized into 1,479 teams with each team hauling 2,000 pounds. Daily consumption of forage set at twenty-six pounds per animal. The rate of march was computed at twenty-four miles per day. These figures represent a single haul without a return trip.

The rate of march for wagon trains varied from twelve to twenty-four miles per day. Weather and road conditions affected these distances, sometimes slowing the rate of march to only three miles a day. The rate of march was also affected by congestion. At normal intervals of twelve yards for each six-mule team, a column of eight hundred wagons in single file occupied between six and eight miles. In one campaign, the supply wagons of a single division occupied fourteen miles!¹⁸

Wagons were not the only conveyances that carried supplies. The Union soldier marched with a load of forty-five pounds on his back. The soldier's load included a rifled musket with bayonet and sixty rounds of ammunition. In his knapsack he carried three to eight days' of marching rations. To protect himself against the weather, he was issued a blanket, a shelter half, and sometimes a ground sheet. For his personal comfort, he carried a mirror, a razor, pencils, paper, and perhaps a sewing kit. When fully loaded, the soldier's knapsack weighed over twenty pounds. Soldiers often jettisoned their knapsacks on long marches or when going into battle.¹⁹

Though immature at the beginning of the Civil War, the logistics system of the North developed into a relatively

¹⁸Edwin B. Coddington, The Gettysburg Campaign (New York: Scribner's Sons: 1968) 190.

¹⁹Luvaas and Nelson, ed., Battle of Antietam, 262-3.

efficient organization as the war progressed. The War Department centralized administration of the war effort and purchased over one billion dollars worth of services and goods for military use. A system of depots and arsenals received, stored, transported, and issued these items to field armies. The field armies transported supplies from their bases to advanced depots using a combination of rail, water, and wagon conveyances. Though cumbersome and dependent on weather and road conditions, wagon trains completed the distribution of items by shuttling supplies from advanced depots to temporary depots in the vicinity of the using units. Over the course of the war, the logistics system of the North was efficient enough to supply the needs of over one million soldiers, a task that had never been accomplished before this time.

CHAPTER 3

HOLLY SPRINGS AND CHICKASAW BAYOU

Although the Vicksburg Campaign began November 2, 1862, General Grant had been thinking about an advance by his own army into Mississippi for several weeks. In September 1862 Grant's department commander, General Halleck, who was now the General in Chief of the Union armies, asked Grant to see if an expedition could be put together for a strike into the Yazoo Delta. The Rebels were believed to be building ironclads somewhere along the Yazoo River and the expedition would disrupt their plans. Nothing came of this Yazoo expedition for the moment, but it did focus Grant's attention on the possibility of an offense into Mississippi.

Grant's ideas on how to defeat the Confederates in this internecine war were changing. Early in the war Grant felt the majority of the South was not committed to the fight and would submit after one or two defeats. But Grant was mistaken. The South had not thrown in the towel. Even after losing much of Missouri and western Tennessee in 1862, the South proved resilient, mounting offensives along a 1,000-mile front.¹

¹Edwin C. Bearss, The Vicksburg Campaign, vol. 1, Vicksburg is the Key (Dayton: Morningside House, 1985), 1.

Like his ideas on Confederate resolve, Grant's view of strategy was changing too.

The strategic planning that had gone on since the Battle of Corinth on October 3, 1862, frustrated Grant. His forces were dispersed throughout western Tennessee, holding the rail lines connecting Columbus, Memphis, and Decatur. He had also sent several units to reinforce General Buell's army as it moved to intercept Confederate forces advancing into central Tennessee. The battle at Corinth proved to Grant that his forces were incapable of occupying western Tennessee and moving against the enemy at the same time. He was not willing to abandon the terrain he occupied, as this would have been too radical a break from the principles of war as he knew them, but he was equally unwilling to devote his army purely to the defense. In a letter to General Halleck after the Battle of Corinth, Grant proposed a way to hold the vital rail lines and at the same time attack the enemy:

I would suggest to you, however, the destruction of the railroads to all points of the compass from Corinth and the opening of the road from Humbolt to Memphis. The Corinth forces I would move to Grand Junction, and add to them the Bolivar forces except a small garrison there. With small re-enforcements at Memphis I think I would be able to move down the Mississippi Central road and cause the evacuation of Vicksburg and be able to capture and destroy all boats in the Yazoo River.²

Grant's proposal suggested a change in strategy for the Union. Instead of defending vital terrain with rifle

²The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (73 vols., 128 parts, Washington, 1880-1901), Ser. I, Vol. XVII, pt. II, 296; hereafter cited as O.R.

pits, why not hold it by driving the enemy away with an attack? In his memoirs Grant explained why he thought this approach was better than previous ones:

At this time my command was holding the Mobile and Ohio railroad from about twenty-five miles south of Corinth My entire command was no more than was necessary to hold these lines, and hardly that if kept on the defensive. By moving against the enemy and into his unsubdued, or not yet captured, territory . . . these lines would nearly hold themselves; thus affording a large force for field operations.³

Grant's move south started when he began to mass his troops at Grand Junction, Tennessee, midway between Memphis and Corinth. By the end of November, 1862, he had his army south of Holly Springs, Mississippi. Table 6 shows the number of soldiers that marched south and the amount of supplies they needed based on Grant's instructions.⁴

Table 6.--Union Soldiers and Supplies in Northern Mississippi
November 26 - December 7, 1862

Command	Commander	Present for duty	Small Arms Ammunition	Rations
Left Wing	Hamilton	13,484	2,696,800	107,872
Right Wing	Sherman	19,572	3,914,400	156,576
Center	McPherson	15,608	3,121,600	124,864
Total		48,664	9,732,800	389,312

Grant planned to use the railroads to bring supplies forward. On November 26, he informed his left wing commander

³Grant, Memoirs, 283-84.

⁴O.R., Ser. I, Vol. XVII, pt. II, 337-38, 358-62.

that trains would deliver 200,000 rations as far down the railroad as possible. The wing commander would then have to move the rations from the rail site to his units using his own wagons. To move his supplies by rail, Grant had requested six locomotives and two hundred railroad cars from the Quartermaster depot at St. Louis.⁵

One of the major problems Grant faced as he moved south was the increasing length of his supply lines. All of his supplies had to come by rail from Columbus, Kentucky, a distance of 200 miles. This was a circuitous route, but one in which Grant had little choice. The depot at Memphis could not supply Grant because there was no direct link between it and Grant's army in northern Mississippi. He could not rely on transports plying the Mississippi River for supplies because the river was sixty miles distant. The vulnerability of his supply lines caused him further anxiety. On November 25 Confederate cavalry attacked Henderson Station, a stop on the Mobile & Ohio railroad eight miles southeast of Jackson, Tennessee. The Confederates burned the station and captured the garrison protecting it.⁶ This incident was an ominous sign for Grant, who was counting on the railroads to supply his army.

To reduce some of the risk involved with long supply lines, Grant began to mass supplies at various points along

⁵Ibid., 352.

⁶Bearss, Vicksburg is the Key, 68-69; Q.R., Ser. I, Vol. XVII, pt. II, 359-60.

the Mississippi Central railroad. Captain J.H. Tighe, Assistant Quartermaster for Grant's army during the move south, described the forward movement of supplies:

About the 1st of June 1862, I received orders direct to proceed to headquarters of the department [sic] of the Mississippi, and report for duty to the Chief Quartermaster there. Arrived at Corinth, (it being the headquarters) and having complied with the spirit of my orders, I was assigned by the Chief Quartermaster Col. Robert Allen to take charge of the clothing, camp, and garrison equipage depot at that place for the army then known as that of the Mississippi, afterwards designated as the Army of the Tennessee.

On the first of December, one month after the forward movement from Corinth, the Army once more resumed its march southward. A few days and headquarters were established at Holly Springs, Mississippi, to which place I was ordered forthwith, and to move all the available property in my charge at La Grange, Tennessee. Pursuant to these commands I immediately commenced to ship my store thither, and the 10th of the same month found me located at Holly Springs engaged in my regular routine of business.

With pressure mounting from Grant's forces advancing south and an expedition from Helena, Arkansas, closing in from the west, the Confederates evacuated their positions along the Tallahatchie River. One week after their evacuation the Confederates were south of the Yalobusha River. They immediately began to fortify this new position, determined to prevent the Union from advancing any further.

Grant was delighted the Confederates had abandoned their defensive positions along the Tallahatchie. Moving to take advantage of the situation, Grant ordered his cavalry chief to pursue the retreating Confederates in an attempt to

⁷Quartermaster General, Annual Reports of Quartermaster Officers, 1863, vol. V, Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 439-51.

interrupt their withdrawal. In an after action report, Colonel Lyle Dickey, the officer who led the pursuit, wrote:

In obedience to the order of the major-general commanding I have the honor to report that at 10 p.m., December 1, while at the headquarters of Major-General McPherson, near Old Waterford, and 5 miles north of the Tallahatchie River, a communication was received from Major-General Grant advising me that the enemy had left his works at the river; that part of our cavalry had crossed and others were crossing, and ordering me to push on at daylight, take command of all the cavalry, and follow the enemy (if retreating) as long as any results were likely to follow.⁸

Because the weather turned bad during the first week of December, Grant slowed his pursuit of the enemy. Hard rains had turned the roads into ribbons of mud, prompting General Sherman to complain that "This country is impractical in rainy weather." Wagons moving supplies forward from Grant's secondary base at Holly Springs sank to their axles in the mire. Fearful that his army would advance beyond supporting distance, Grant ordered his division commanders not to get separated from their supply wagons.⁹

As the pace of the Union army slowed to that of its wagon trains, Grant busied himself with messages to his chief engineer and quartermaster. He directed his chief quartermaster to abandon La Grange, Tennessee, as a main depot and to move all of the supplies there to Holly Springs. Grant urged his chief engineer to speed up railroad repairs from the Tallahatchie northward. Grant wanted to take advantage

⁸Q.R., Ser. I, Vol. XVII, pt. I, 491.

⁹Q.R., Ser. I, Vol. XVII, pt. II, 374, 387.

of the greater hauling capacity of the railroads in order to bring up supplies. ¹⁰

By the latter half of December 1862, the Army of the Tennessee was immersed in activity. Political maneuvering in Washington had made a Mississippi River expedition inevitable. Not wanting this expedition to be a separate command within his own department, Grant chose Major General William T. Sherman, then commanding the Army's right wing, to lead it. From his headquarters at Oxford Grant wrote:

You will proceed with as little delay as possible, to Memphis, Tennessee, taking with you one division of your present command. On your arrival at Memphis you will assume command of all the troops there, and that portion of General Curtis's forces at present east of the Mississippi River, and organize them into brigades and divisions in your own army. As soon as possible move with them down the river to the vicinity of Vicksburg, and with the cooperation of the gunboat fleet under the command of Flag-officer Porter proceed to the reduction of that place in such manner as circumstances, and your own judgement, may dictate."¹¹

Grant had three goals in mind when he sent Sherman this order. His first goal was to gain control over the forces within his department that were not under his direct supervision. The second goal was to place a trusted subordinate in charge of the expedition. The third goal was to have this expedition assist in the reduction of Vicksburg.

Grant envisioned a two-pronged attack against Vicksburg. The Union forces massing at Oxford would hold the

¹⁰Grant, Memoirs, 286; O.R., Ser. I, Vol. XVII, pt. II, 386.

¹¹Grant, Memoirs, 287.

enemy south of the Yalobusha while the expedition from Memphis and Helena would strike at the fortress itself. Grant would supply the forces moving overland toward Jackson, Mississippi, from advanced depots. As his army moved deeper into the heart of the Confederacy, Grant intended to have the depots closely follow the army. Captain Joshua Norton, Grant's post quartermaster at Oxford, Mississippi, described the events:

Nov 26, 1862 I received orders from Maj Genl Grant to report to C.A. Reynolds, Lt. Col. and Chief Quartermaster of dept. [sic] of Tenn. at La Grange, Tenn having been assigned to duty as Post Quartermaster. This order was afterward countermanded . . . and I was directed to report to Holly Springs, Miss.

Dec 14 I proceeded to Holly Springs, Miss with a supply of Quartermaster Stores and a large lot of clothing, camp and garrison equipage and arrived same day at 9 o'clock P.M.

Dec 15 Received special orders No. 47 from Maj Genl. U.S. Grant to proceed to Oxford, Miss. for duty as Post Quartermaster.

Dec 16 Left for Oxford with 20 six-mule teams leaving the stores in charge of my clerk Geo. Anderson and 14 men to follow by rail as soon as possible.

Dec 17 Arrived at Oxford (Dec 17) at 4 o'clock P.M.

Dec 18 Reported to Maj Genl. Grant for orders.¹²

As Grant's army continued its move south, Sherman's expedition prepared to debark from Memphis. Sherman would support this expedition with supplies drawn from the depots at Memphis and St. Louis. Sixty-two steamboats were used for the operation, with each division receiving at least one boat to carry its commissary, ordnance, and quartermaster stores. When Sherman started down the Mississippi River, he carried

¹²Quartermaster General, Annual Reports of Quartermaster Officers, 1863, vol. IV, Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 409-21.

at least five days of supplies with him. Using the basic load prescribed by Sherman, Table 7 shows the supplies the expedition would have needed.¹³

Table 7.--Supplies needed by Sherman's Mississippi Expedition, December 18, 1862

Command	Present for Duty	Small Arms Cartridges	Artillery Rounds	Basic Load Rations
Corps Staff	7	1,400		105
1st Div	7,354	1,470,800		110,310
2nd Div	5,582	1,116,400		83,730
3th Div	7,580	1,516,000		113,700
4th Div	9,552	1,910,400		143,280
Artillery	44 Guns		17,600	
Total	30,075	6,015,000	17,600	451,125

The logistics of the Mississippi River operation worked well. Sherman recounts that "the Mississippi boats were admirably calculated for handling troops, horses, guns, stores, etc., . . . and supplies of all kinds were abundant, except fuel."¹⁴ Fuel was easily obtained along the river banks by using the wood from fences, houses, and dead trees.

Captain John L. Woods, a quartermaster officer accompanying the expedition, shared Sherman's observation that the expedition was well supplied. After the failed assault at Chickasaw Bayou, Captain Woods evacuated a large

¹³O.R., Ser I, Vol. XVII, pt. 1, 602. Sherman had five steamboats on hand for supplies. One steamboat could carry 500 tons, enough supplies to sustain 40,000 men and 18,000 horses for two days. Huston, Sinews of War, 211.

¹⁴Sherman, Memoirs, 312.

amount of subsistence stores from the Yazoo River before they could fall into the hands of the enemy.¹⁵

Unlike Grant's supply lines, Sherman's lines were relatively secure. In proceeding down river, Sherman placed navy gunboats in the lead. He distributed others throughout the column of transports and placed several at the end of the column to bring up the rear. He maneuvered his river convoy by divisions and brigades, which allowed sufficient combat power to protect against guerilla activity. Sherman recalled that partisans infested the river banks, but did not dare to molest his strong force.¹⁶

On December 20, 1862, disaster struck Grant's supply lines. Confederate General Earl Van Dorn captured Grant's supply base at Holly Springs while Bedford Forrest ripped up the railroad and telegraph lines connecting Columbus, Kentucky, and Jackson, Tennessee. Van Dorn caused immense damage at Holly Springs, capturing the garrison of 1,500 men and burning all the supplies his cavalry could not carry off. General Forrest caused so much damage to the railroads between Columbus and Jackson that Grant could not restock Holly Springs from his base of supplies. Captain J.H. Tighe, the quartermaster officer in charge of the clothing and equipage stores at Holly Springs at the time of Van Dorn's raid, described the incident:

¹⁵Quartermaster General, Annual Reports of Quartermaster Officers, 1863, vol. V, Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 911-7.

¹⁶Sherman, Memoirs, 312.

I was thus ten days occupied when unhappily occurred the most disagreeable reverse our arms have sustained in this department: the capture of Holly Springs and the destruction of all the Government property there accumulated by the rebel forces under Generals Van Dorn and Armstrong. As the result of this catastrophe my whole stock of clothing, camp and garrison equipage, together with all the property records and office records in my possession were either destroyed or carried off by the enemy. Early on the morning of the same day I myself was taken prisoner and having refused to accept a parole was placed under guard and retained until late on the same day when I managed to escape with those who had accepted such condition of release, and on the following day reported to the general commanding for duty.¹⁷

The destruction of quartermaster Tighe's supplies at Holly Springs was so complete that his annual report covered only the last six months of the fiscal year ending June 30, 1863.

Because the Confederates destroyed all of the Union supply records at Holly Springs, the exact amount of supplies lost is difficult to determine. In a letter to his department commander Lieutenant General Pemberton, General Van Dorn provided an estimate of the damage inflicted:

I surprised the enemy at this place this morning; burned up all the quartermaster's stores, cotton, &c.--an immense amount; burned up many trains; took a great many arms and about 1,500 prisoners. I presume the value of the stores would amount to \$1,500,000.¹⁸

Shortly after the Holly Springs raid, a military commission convened to investigate the incident. The testimony of Lieutenant Colonel Charles A. Reynolds, the

¹⁷Quartermaster General, Annual Reports of Quartermaster Officers, 1863, vol. V, Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 439-51.

¹⁸O.R., Vol. XVII, pt. I, 503.

chief quartermaster of the depot, gave some idea of the amount of clothing on hand when the depot was destroyed:

I can state that a day or two before I left Holly Springs, I visited the storehouses and place of business of Quartermaster Tighe as had been my custom to do frequently and make a casual examination of the Government property in his hands. Quartermaster Tighe had at that time a large and full supply of army clothing, camp and garrison equipage in his possession. I cannot state positively but should think he had ten thousand (10,000) suits of clothing, more of some articles of clothing and less of others.¹⁹

Brigadier General Thomas A. Davies, the Union commander at Columbus, placed the commissary loss at seven hundred head of cattle and one million rations.²⁰

The Confederate raid caused Grant to abandon his campaign into the interior of Mississippi. In a letter to General Sherman, who was heading down the Mississippi River, Grant wrote that he was forced to pull back to the Tallahatchie because he had been cut off from his supplies. Captain Joshua Norton, the post quartermaster officer at Oxford, Mississippi, wrote that the Union army was placed on half rations in order to survive. Grant confiscated food from the countryside to feed his army and to punish those civilians whose sympathies lay with the South. Corresponding with General Sullivan, commander of the District of Jackson, Tennessee, Grant ordered:

Instruct all your post commanders to collect all the forage, beef cattle, and fat hogs in their vicinity

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Q.R., Ser. I, Vol. XVII, pt. II, 479.

belonging to secessionists, and have them issued by the commissary and quartermaster. Send some forage and cattle to Corinth immediately, or as soon as possible; they are out of rations.²¹

Grant learned an important lesson from the Holly Springs incident. In his memoirs he explained that although the loss of supplies was great, those taken from the country more than compensated for the loss and that he was "amazed at the quantity of supplies the country afforded."²² Later in the campaign Grant would use the lesson of impressment to great advantage.

Grant's withdrawal from central Mississippi portended disaster for Sherman's Mississippi expedition. As the Federal army pulled back from Oxford, Sherman was landing troops along the banks of the Yazoo River about one mile south of the mouth of Chickasaw Bayou. After the troops disembarked from the transports, fatigue parties set to work unloading regimental wagons, artillery, cavalry horses, and commissary and ordnance supplies. Sherman wanted enough supplies on the ground for five days' operations.²³

When the Confederates realized that Grant was moving his army north, they quickly sent reinforcements from their defenses along the Yalobusha to Vicksburg. General Pemberton ordered two brigades from Granada to Vicksburg, while a third brigade was sent from Middle Tennessee. These brigades went

²¹Ibid., 465.

²²Grant, Memoirs, 291.

²³O.R., Ser. I, Vol. XVII, pt. I, 621.

immediately into battle and played a key role in repulsing the Union soldiers at Chickasaw Bayou.

With exception of small arms ammunition, supplies appeared to be adequate for the Union soldiers who fought at Chickasaw Bayou. In Special Orders #38, J.H. Hammond, Assistant Adjutant for the 13th Army Corps, described where divisions could get supplies.

Rations can be had at Lake's; artillery ammunition at headquarters and on board the steamer General Anderson. Musket ammunition should be carefully husbanded and distributed in each division. All musket ammunition not now in the boxes of the men or in the regimental wagons will forthwith be sent on board the General Anderson and delivered to Lieutenant Neely, ordnance officer, who will receipt for the same and reissue to regimental commanders, so that each man has on his person 60 rounds.²⁴

Before Sherman's expedition embarked at Memphis, Grant's ordnance officer ordered six million rounds of small arms ammunition to outfit the expedition. The depot at St. Louis was to ship the cartridges to Memphis. The munitions had not arrived by the time Sherman set sail for Vicksburg. Critically short small arms ammunition on December 29, Sherman redistributed the rounds he had and sent an urgent message to Admiral Porter, commander of the expedition's naval squadron, for assistance. Sherman asked Porter to send the squadron's "fleetest light-draft boat" to Memphis to bring back the ammunition that had arrived there from St. Louis. Upon receiving Sherman's request, Porter fired off a message to the commander of the tinclad Rattler to proceed to

²⁴Ibid., 623.

Memphis. There the boat would be loaded with four million cartridges. After refueling, the boat would return to Vicksburg. Porter's order to the commander of the tinclad revealed the seriousness of the shortage. Porter urged the tinclad's commander to, "work day and night, and say to the ordnance officer that a great deal depends on speed."²⁵

Sherman's last attempt to dislodge the Confederates came in the form of an amphibious assault against the Confederate battery at Haines' Bluff. Planned for New Year's Day, the attack was scuttled by fog that same morning. Since communication with Grant had been cut off by Nathan Forrest's raid, Sherman sent his official account of the expedition to General Halleck. Obviously frustrated by the expedition's outcome, Sherman tersely summed up its results:

I reached Vicksburg at the time appointed, landed, assaulted, and failed. Re-embarked my command unopposed and turned it over to my successor, General McClernand."²⁶

The destruction of Holly Springs was a terrible blow to Grant's plans to take Vicksburg. The Confederate raid left the large Federal depot in ruins and the Army of the Tennessee without supplies. Grant could not restock his supplies because of a second Confederate raid against the Mobile & Ohio Railroad in West Tennessee, the vital link that connected Columbus, Kentucky, to the depots in Tennessee and

²⁵Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion. Ser. 1, Vol. 23, (Washington: GPO, 1910), 584-85.

²⁶Q.R., Ser. I, Vol. XVII, pt. II, 613.

northern Mississippi. Left without a means of supply, Grant was forced to pull back. When the pressure Grant exerted against the Yalobusha line eased, General Pemberton sent reinforcements to buttress the Vicksburg defenses. These troops arrived in time to repel Sherman's assault at Chickasaw Bayou. It is doubtful whether the Vicksburg defenders could have held off Sherman's attack without the reinforcements sent by Pemberton.

CHAPTER 4

VICKSBURG: THE INDIRECT APPROACH

After the Holly Springs incident Grant established his headquarters at Memphis, Tennessee. He also made some operational decisions on what steps to take next in the campaign against Vicksburg. His first decision was to abandon most of northern Mississippi and any ideas to try this route again. He made this decision because of the difficulty in supporting his army over vulnerable supply lines. In a letter to Army Headquarters written on Christmas day, Grant explained that it was "Impracticable to go further south by this route, depending on the [rail] road for supplies."¹ Although Grant wrote glowingly in his memoirs about the abundant food the country yielded, he was not about to continue his overland advance without secure supply lines. With respect to food impressed from the countryside, the tone of Grant's correspondence after the destruction of Holly Springs did not share the same enthusiasm as his memoirs did. In the same letter to Army Headquarters, Grant wrote that he had to send "A large wagon train to Memphis after supplies" Reports from at least one corps commander told of shortages instead of abundance. In a

¹Q.R., Ser. I, Vol. XVII, pt. I, 477-78.

dispatch from his camp on the Tallahatchie River on Christmas eve, General McPherson, commanding the XVII Corps, wrote that although his soldiers had been placed on three-quarter rations, his command would exhaust its stores by December 30.² This report prompted Grant to send the large wagon train to Memphis for supplies along with Brigadier General Quinby's Seventh Division as escort.

In other units three-quarter rations were a luxury. Charles Wright, a corporal in the 81st Ohio Volunteers, wrote that his regiment was placed on half rations for over two weeks. His regiment may have obtained some items from the countryside, but his account of escorting a wagon train of provisions suggested that impressed food alone d'd not always fill the stomachs of hungry soldiers. Wright recalled:

About the middle of January we received intelligence that a cargo of provisions under the protection of the gunboats had come up the Tennessee to Hamburg. How ready we were to march and escort a train of wagons to Hamburg to bring back provisions; and how we did march, and when those wagons were loaded and on their way back to Corinth, could they have been taken from us? Not while our ammunition lasted.³

Grant's second decision was to reinforce the Mississippi River expedition. Militarily, this was unwise. Sherman had already suffered three thousand casualties in the swamps and tangles of Chickasaw Bayou. Confederate losses were only a fraction of that amount. The defenders of

²Q.R., Ser. I, Vol. XVII, pt. II, 472.

³Charles Wright, Experiences in the Ranks, Company C, 81st Ohio Volunteer Infantry (Philadelphia: James Beale, 1887), 73-74.

Vicksburg enjoyed the advantage of terrain. The Confederate citadel was impervious to attack from the west because its coastal batteries commanded the river. Swamps, bayous, and brambles protected the northern and southern approaches to the fort. The expedition's chain of command added to Grant's headaches. Since McClernand was senior to Sherman, Grant felt obligated to put the former Illinois congressman in command. Grant did not have faith in McClernand's ability to command large units and said so in his correspondence. Since he was not about to let McClernand command the expedition, Grant would have to take charge of it himself.

Politically, the reinforcement of the expedition down river was wise. The Federal disaster at Fredericksburg, the stalemate in central Tennessee, the poor Republican showing in the previous autumn's elections, and the prospect of a long, drawn out war had wearied even most patriotic Northerners. A retreat from Vicksburg would signal another Union defeat, a defeat the Lincoln administration could ill afford. As soon as the details of Sherman's defeat reached Washington, General Halleck fired off a telegram exhorting Grant to reinforce Sherman with ". . . everything you can dispense with in Tennessee and Mississippi." Preventing the appearance of another Union defeat was foremost in Halleck's mind. He concluded his message by urging "We must not fail in this if within human power to accomplish it."⁴

⁴O.R., Ser. I, Vol. XVII, pt. II, 5.2.

To implement his decision to reinforce the Mississippi expedition and to establish guidelines for those who would stay behind in West Tennessee, Grant issued detailed instructions on January 15. He placed Brigadier General Hamilton in charge of the districts Columbus, Jackson, Corinth, and Memphis, and renamed this command the District of West Tennessee. Hamilton was to guard the Memphis & Charleston railroad, which connected Memphis, Grand Junction, and Corinth. Grant designated the divisions of Generals Quinby, Logan, and McArthur to reinforce the expedition down river. Major General McPherson would exercise overall command of these three divisions.⁵

Grant's quartermasters worked overtime to outfit the reinforcements destined for Vicksburg. Lewis B. Parsons, a quartermaster officer working in the Office of the General Supervisor of Transportation at St. Louis, wrote:

On Friday 2d [January 2, 1863] there were requisitions . . . for immediate transportation of over six thousand five hundred mules, horses, and cattle, six hundred wagons, and about one thousand tons of other freight to Genl Banks's command at New Orleans, twelve hundred miles distant; also for over four thousand like animals to Memphis, Vicksburg, and Little Rock, and more than three thousand tons of commissary, quartermaster's stores, and coal, to the same places"⁶

Captain G. L. Fort, a quartermaster officer at Jackson, Tennessee, reported:

⁵Q.R., Ser. I, Vol. XVII, pt. II, 565.

⁶Quartermaster General, Annual Reports of Quartermaster Officers, 1863, vol. IV, Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 551-615.

I was ordered by Maj Genl Grant to Memphis Tenn., with all my stores . . . to supply and help fit out his troops, then embarking for Vicksburg and I accordingly arrived at Memphis . . . and very soon disposed of all the stores I had.

In his orders Grant detailed the stores he needed for continuing the Vicksburg campaign. He directed his chiefs of artillery and ordnance to ship enough ordnance for 50,000 infantry, 26 batteries of artillery, and 2,000 cavalry. He added that the troops moving down the Mississippi would go with ". . . three days' cooked rations in their haversacks and seven days' additional rations on hand." Division commanders would take an additional thirty days' rations. Table 8 shows the quantity of stores Grant's supply officers would have needed to fill their commander's request.⁸

Table 8.--Supply Requirements for Special Orders No. 15,
Department of the Tennessee, January 15, 1863

Type Unit	Strength	Small Arms Cartridges	Artillery Rounds	Rations
Infantry.....	50,000	25,000,000		6,000,000
Artillery....	3,068		62,400	368,160
Cavalry.....	2,000	1,000,000		240,000
Total.....	55,068	26,000,000	62,400	6,608,160

⁷Quartermaster General, Annual Reports of Quartermaster Officers, 1863, vol. II, Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 621-37.

⁸Calculations based on Special Orders No. 15, O.R., Ser. I, Vol. XVII, pt. II, 565. Grant wanted 500 rounds of ammunition per man for the infantry and cavalry. He also wanted the artillery caissons filled twice. Artillery ammunition calculated for 26-six gun batteries at 400 rounds per gun. Each soldier was to carry 10 days' rations, while each division was to carry an additional 30 days' rations.

To pack as many troops and supplies on board the transports as he could, Grant limited the amount of wagons the units could take with them. He allowed each infantry regiment five wagons and two ambulances. An artillery company was authorized one wagon. Brigade and division commanders were allowed an additional wagon for themselves.⁹ When Grant felt his business finished at Memphis, he boarded his headquarters boat Magnolia and steamed down river.

As Grant steamed down the Mississippi River, several thoughts must have crossed his mind. His army had come a long way since the battle at Belmont, the first battle Grant fought in the Civil War. Together, he and his army had experienced hard-fought victories and humiliating defeats. Victories at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson gained him and his army favorable recognition. Pyrrhic success at Shiloh brought accusations of drunkenness and laxity. Shiloh was a painful lesson that Grant remained sensitive to for many years. His attempt to move through northern Mississippi after encouraging results at Iuka and Corinth ended in embarrassment after Confederate cavalry cut him off from his supply lines. As a result the expedition down river failed with frightful losses. But despite the failures and accusations, he had been promoted. He was a major general now, commanding an army of 121,000 soldiers, many of them

⁹Ibid.

battle-tested.¹⁰ Though his initial plans to take Vicksburg were ruined, he must have felt confident that the Confederate citadel would eventually fall. What he did not realize was the amount of effort the capitulation would take. As Grant headed down river, he carried two essential elements for victory: faith in himself and belief in his soldiers.

Grant also carried a third important element for victory: confidence in his supply system. Grant personally knew Brigadier General Robert Allen, the chief quartermaster officer of the large Union depot at St. Louis. This was the same Robert Allen who befriended Grant in San Francisco in 1854. In that year Grant had resigned from the Army. It was the worst possible time for him to leave for he had no trade or profession to support himself or those who depended on him. Allen heard about Grant through some men talking and went to search for him. Upon finding him, he described Grant as "miserable," "haggard," and "sorrowful." Allen arranged transportation for Grant to New York and gave him enough money to pay for daily needs. Upon arriving in New York, Grant may have written Allen for additional funds to travel home.¹¹

Brigadier General Allen was not only a reliable friend to Grant, but also a competent quartermaster officer.

¹⁰Ibid., 578.

¹¹Hamlin Garland, Ulysses S. Grant His Life and Character (New York: Doubleday & McClure, 1898), 128-29.

His depot shipped thousands of tons of supplies down the Mississippi River to the Army of the Tennessee. Between June 30, 1862, and June 30, 1863, Allen paid \$20 million in vouchers for the Departments of the Tennessee, Mississippi, and Northwest. In his fiscal year 1863 report to the Chief Quartermaster, his depot issued the following items to those same departments:¹²

Table 9.--Supplies Issued by the St. Louis Depot between June 30, 1862 and June 30, 1863

Item	Issued	Item	Issued
Horses.....	55,301	Trousers, Footmen....	389,398
Mules.....	32,878	Trousers, Mounted....	145,114
Oxen.....	238	Shirts, Flannel.....	605,644
Army Wagons.....	5,567	Drawers, Flannel.....	431,951
Ambulances.....	659	Stockings.....	761,730
Wheel Harnesses.....	8,087	Shoes and boots.....	254,032
Lead Harnesses.....	13,899	Cavalry Boots.....	140,247
Riding Saddles.....	2,817	Canteens.....	190,220
Pack Saddles.....	5,215	Haversacks.....	159,645
Bridles.....	1,907	Knapsacks.....	85,311
Boats, Barges.....	115	Blankets, Woolen....	261,527
Single Harness.....	4,637	Blankets, Waterproof.	39,731
Steam Boats.....	8	Tents, Shelter.....	56,559
Railroad Cars.....	8	Camp, Kettles.....	37,923
Locomotive Engines....	4	Mess Pans.....	76,876
Coats, Uniform.....	85,255	Axes.....	25,032
Jackets, Infantry.....	17,387	Ax Handles.....	29,186
Jackets, Cavalry.....	58,602	Spades.....	17,629

Grant also felt confident in his own department's base of supplies at Memphis. Grant had left strong garrisons at Memphis, Columbus, Jackson, and Corinth to protect the

¹²Quartermaster General, Annual Reports of Quartermaster Officers, 1863, vol. I, Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 44-73.

supply base and the transportation network that serviced it. Memphis was well-stocked with medical, ordnance, and quartermaster supplies, and had excellent access to waterways and railroads. Captain J. H. Tighe, the hapless quartermaster officer whose stores were burned by the Confederates at Holly Springs, was stationed at Memphis until Vicksburg fell. There he continued to supply the needs of Grant's army. Table 10 shows the supplies Captain Tighe issued to the Department of the Tennessee.¹³

Table 10.--Supplies Issued by the Memphis Depot, Department of the Tennessee, between January 1, 1863 and June 30, 1863

Item	Issued	Item	Issued
Great Coats.....	40,499	Haversacks.....	73,380
Uniform Coats.....	10,807	Canteens.....	70,499
Jackets.....	31,165	Wall Tents.....	1,969
Blouses.....	71,559	Common Tents.....	8,458
Trousers.....	184,227	Hospital Tents.....	688
Shirts.....	194,691	Bell Tents.....	1,573
Drawers.....	127,069	Sibley Tents.....	94
Stockings.....	234,461	Shelter Tents.....	15,680
Bootees.....	109,214	Camp Kettles.....	10,406
Boots.....	40,458	Mess Pans.....	14,722
Hats.....	73,934	Shovels.....	3,080
Caps.....	34,023	Spades.....	10,413
Blankets, Wool.....	37,976	Axes.....	10,334
Blankets, Rubber.....	40,506	Pick Axes.....	4,749
Knapsacks.....	24,819	Hatchets.....	1,156

Grant landed at Young's Point, Louisiana, on January 29, 1863. With a pair of field glasses he scanned the

¹³Quartermaster General, Annual Reports of Quartermaster Officers, 1863, vol. V, Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 439-51.

Vicksburg fortress across the river. What he saw was not encouraging. Vicksburg was built on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River. The town's wharves and docks ran down to the river's edge, and its streets climbed to the plateau above. The town itself was protected by a formidable array of ordnance. The Vicksburg defenses included shore batteries and batteries situated on the bluffs high above the river. Confederate armament consisted of forty-two guns, most of which were large caliber.¹⁴ These could deal with any ship attempting to challenge the town from the river. If Grant was uncertain on how to proceed with the campaign at this point, he at least knew that attacking Vicksburg from the river would be a difficult task.

The problem of getting at Vicksburg from another direction proved vexing to Grant. From January through March 1863, Grant launched a series of efforts to gain a foothold from which to attack the city.

A canal was attempted across De Soto Point, a muddy, finger-like projection that the Mississippi River looped west of Vicksburg. Harassing fire from the Confederate shore batteries, poor weather, and a sudden rise in the river that broke a dam at the upper end of the canal caused Grant to abandon the project.

Further north, another canal was dug. This one connected Lake Providence with the Mississippi River in the

¹⁴Warren E. Grabau. The Vicksburg Campaign (np: 1989) 249-50.

hope of bypassing Vicksburg's defenses by way of Red River. Like the canal across De Soto Point, the Lake Providence project was halted when a navigable channel through the backwaters proved impractical.

Almost three hundred miles upriver a levee was dynamited to connect a meandering bayou known as Yazoo Pass with the Mississippi River. Once Union engineers blasted the levee, Grant ordered gunboats and transports from Helena, Arkansas, to enter the Yazoo Pass and make their way to the Coldwater and Tallahatchie Rivers. If successful, Grant would outflank Vicksburg from the north. This plan fell through when Union gunboats and infantry could not reduce Fort Pemberton, a Confederate stronghold built on a narrow neck of land separating the Tallahatchie and Yazoo Rivers.

Grant's last try at navigating the waterways of the Mississippi Delta was a naval expedition led by Admiral Porter through Steele's Bayou. Steele's Bayou was actually the first of several waterways that bypassed Vicksburg by way of Black Bayou, Deer Creek, Rolling Fork, and the Big Sunflower River. If the expedition was successful, Grant would gain access to the Yazoo River above Haynes' Bluff and thus get into the rear of Vicksburg without facing the city's formidable river defenses. The expedition ended in failure when Porter's flotilla bogged down in the torturous backwaters of the Delta.

Grant's army obtained supplies in a variety of ways while attempting to circumvent Vicksburg. Engaged in digging

a canal across De Soto Point, Sherman's corps had most its stores aboard steamers at Young's Point. Captain John L. Wood, a quartermaster officer assigned to the XV Army Corps, reported, "The troops were immediately disembarked and formed into camp. The steamboat Des Arc was assigned to me as a storeboat, which I kept as long as I had any stores."¹⁵ Since heavy rains had turned Young's Point into a swamp, supplies could not be stored on the ground. Major John A. Bering, of the 48th Ohio Volunteers, described the area:

Young's Point, at that time of the year, presented a dark and gloomy aspect. In our front was the Mississippi river; in the rear, a dreary swamp, covered with water, from one to two feet deep, leaving us but a narrow strip to set our tents. The winter winds and the heavy rains had obstructed play on our canvas dwellings, and it was a common occurrence for the men to emerge from underneath their prostrate tents, after a heavy storm of wind and rain, as it swept down the Mississippi.¹⁶

Mules were used to haul supplies from the steamboats tied up along the river to camp sites, for wagons could not negotiate the mud caused by the drenching rains.

Resupply came mostly from the depots at St. Louis and Memphis. Captain Wood recalled in his annual report, "On the 4th of February I was ordered to St. Louis for supplies which were promptly procured and forwarded to Lieutenant E. M. Joel, AAQM, acting for me."

¹⁵Quartermaster General, Annual Reports of Quartermaster Officers, 1863, vol. V, Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 911-17.

¹⁶John A. Bering and Thomas Montgomery, History of the Forty-Eighth Ohio Veteran Volunteer Infantry (Hillsboro, Ohio: Highland News Office, 1880), 72-73.

The plantations around Young's Point yielded few supplies for Union foraging parties, having long been abandoned by their occupants.

In February Grant assigned one of his staff officers to investigate the use of Lake Providence, a body of water fifty miles above Vicksburg, in what appeared to be a more promising venture than the canal across De Soto Point. After an encouraging report from this staff officer, Grant wrote to General McPherson, then at Memphis, to hurry a division to Lake Providence and to have an additional division ready to move at a moment's notice. In a letter dated February 5, 1863, Grant suggested that McPherson bring all the entrenching tools he could. He also suggested that McPherson could impress meat and forage, since they were in "great abundance" in the area.¹⁷

In response to Grant's letter, McPherson prepared two divisions for movement. McPherson would also take a boat for commissary and quartermaster supplies. In a letter to Grant shortly before leaving Memphis, McPherson wrote:

I shall commence embarking General Logan's division Friday morning The commissary and quartermaster's boat have been loaded for the last eight days, and are ready to haul out into the stream, so that there will be no detention on this account.¹⁸

From his headquarters at Memphis, McPherson published Special Orders No. 15, which outlined in detail how the

¹⁷Q.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. III, 33.

¹⁸Ibid., 59.

divisions destined for Lake Providence were to be supplied.

The orders stated:

VI. Brig. Gen. John A. Logan, commanding Third Division, will commence embarking his command on the boats to-morrow morning, the 19th instant. The assignment of the different regiments to their respective transports will be made in time to prevent any confusion.

The troops will be provided as follows:

1. With all the ammunition required by existing orders.
2. With three days' cooked rations in haversacks and seven days' additional on hand.
3. With all the axes, spades, and other tools in the command.
4. Division commissaries will take thirty days' rations for future use.
5. With 5 wagons to each regiment, 1 to each company of artillery, and 1 in addition to each brigade and division commander.
6. With two ambulances for each regiment.¹⁹

Table 11 shows the quantity of supplies Logan's division took on the Lake Providence expedition based on McPherson's orders.²⁰

Table 11.--Supply Requirements for Logan's Division,
Lake Providence Expedition

Type Unit	Strength	Small Arms Cartridges	Artillery Rounds	Rations	Wagons
Staff.....	3	1,500		360	1
Infantry....	7,228	3,614,000		867,360	181
Artillery...	524		26,400	62,880	11
Total.....	7,755	3,615,500	26,400	930,600	193

¹⁹Ibid., 60.

²⁰Small arms ammunition calculated using a basic load of 500 rounds for the infantry. Artillery ammunition based on 11-six gun batteries with 400 rounds per gun. Rations calculated on 40 days' of supply. Wagon authorization based on Special Orders No. 15. Unit strength from O.R., Ser. I, Vol. XVII, pt. II, 512-14.

McPherson supplemented his command's provisions with wild game, which was abundant in the area, and supplies taken from Lake Providence plantations. One correspondent who spent several days with the troops at Lake Providence extolled the beauty of the area. He wrote of excellent fishing, plentiful fowl, and foraging parties that came "back laden with turkeys and chickens."²¹

While Sherman's corps battled mud at Young's Point and McPherson's corps prepared for Lake Providence, Grant's chief topographical engineer was surveying a third route to get around Vicksburg. The third route led from Yazoo Pass, six miles south of Helena, into the Coldwater, Tallahatchie, and Yazoo Rivers. If navigated successfully, this route would enable Grant to turn Pemberton's right flank at Snyder's Bluff.

Upon receiving news that Yazoo Pass was navigable, Grant ordered General Prentiss, commanding the District of Eastern Arkansas, to send one division through the Pass and into the Coldwater and Tallahatchie Rivers. Grant directed this division to take with them "fifteen days' rations, a portion of their tents and cooking utensils, but no wagons."²² Prentiss sent a copy of Grant's directive along with one of his own to General Ross, the division commander who would lead the expedition. Prentiss added that each

²¹Bearss, Vicksburg, vol. 1, Vicksburg is the Key, 475.

²²Q.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. III, 56

soldier in the division would have 160 rounds of ammunition. The expedition was to move as soon as possible, drawing its supplies from the quartermaster stores at Helena as General Ross saw fit. The expedition sailed from Helena to Yazoo Pass on February 23. Table 12 shows the ammunition and rations the expedition would have taken along in order to satisfy Grant's and Prentiss's orders.²³

Table 12.--Ammunition and Ration Requirements for Ross's Division, Yazoo Pass Expedition

Strength	Small Arms Ammunition	Rations
1,803	288,480	81,135

General Ross's expedition entered Yazoo Pass on February 25. The narrowness of the Pass and high winds delayed the expedition's entry into the Coldwater River until March 1. Some army transports took five days to make the sixteen-mile trip. On March 7 the expedition joined a naval squadron of gun boats, rams, and coal barges at the confluence of the Coldwater and Tallahatchie Rivers. The entire convoy then chugged down the Tallahatchie toward Greenwood, Mississippi.

As the Union flotilla steamed toward Greenwood, supply shortages began to appear. The commissary stores of General Ross's expedition began to spoil. While additional

²³Ibid., 56, 74; Q.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. I, 400.

rations were sent for, foraging parties were sent ashore to gather provisions. By March 10, Ross's troops were placed on half rations.²⁴ The army transports had also exhausted most of their fuel. To replenish empty the fuel, the expedition put parties ashore to cut wood.

General Ross appeared to have solved the ration shortage by ordering more from his base in Helena. In a report to General Prentiss, Ross wrote, "In regard to rations, I have enough only to supply me to the 13th. I ordered 30,000 more rations forward." These rations would last Ross until the 22nd. Ross also reported that many of the navy's gunboats were out of rations and were expecting to draw from Army supplies. In fact, he had already issued rations to some of the gunboats. Ross anticipated needing an additional 50,000 rations to finish the reduction of Fort Pemberton. He was obviously concerned with protecting his supply lines, for he had detailed a gunboat and an infantry regiment to meet the supply transports at either Greenwood, if it had fallen, or the mouth of the Yalobusha.²⁵

Foraging for provisions and fuel slowed the progress of the Yazoo Pass expedition and drew complaints from the naval commander in charge of the gunboats. In a report to Admiral Porter, Lieutenant Commander Wilson Smith wrote that

²⁴Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion (31 vol. ; Washington, 1895-1929), Ser. I, Vol. 24, p. 266 (cited hereafter as O.R.N.).

²⁵O.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. I, 394.

foraging was spoiling the expedition's chances for success. Smith expected a "rough time" at Greenwood because of these delays.²⁶ The Confederates would not disappoint him. On March 11 when the Federal flotilla attacked Fort Pemberton, the hastily built Rebel fortification on a narrow neck of land separating the Tallahatchie and Yazoo Rivers, the Confederates were ready.

By March 13 Fort Pemberton's defenses had repulsed two attacks by Union gunboats. As the gunboats girded for a third attack, Lieutenant Commander Smith noted shortages of certain types of ammunition for his heavy naval guns. His gunboats needed shot and shell for their Parrott guns. They also needed fuses. His mortar boats had used two-thirds of their shells and required replenishing. Because of the shortage of ammunition, General Ross decided to place the gunboats in support of an infantry assault. The plan called for the gunboats to rapidly close with the fort, blasting the defenders with grapeshot at "close quarters." If the gunboats could silence the fort's batteries, the infantry would land and carry the fort by storm.²⁷ The plan was called off when Confederate artillery struck and disabled one of the Union gunboats only fifteen minutes into the attack.

Although additional Union reinforcements were sent to bolster the Yazoo Pass Expedition, the Confederates were able

²⁶O.R.N., Ser. I, Vol. 24, 264.

²⁷O.R.N., Ser. I, Vol. 24, 274; O.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. I, 396.

to concentrate faster. Grant recalled the expedition on March 28, for it had obviously failed. He blamed the failure on the delay of Ross's expedition, a delay caused, in part, by supply shortages and a tenuous, 200-mile supply line.²⁸

Not to be outdone by the Army, Admiral Porter, commander of the Federal naval forces on the Mississippi, hatched a plan to outflank Vicksburg. From his charts of the Delta, Porter surmised that a naval force could navigate a connecting series of waterways to gain access to Big Sunflower River. From there, the navy could enter the Yazoo River and either steam north to strike Fort Pemberton or south to outflank Vicksburg. Satisfied with the plan's feasibility after a personal reconnaissance, Grant ordered General Sherman to organize a task force to support Porter's gunboats. Sherman responded by placing his Second Division on alert and forming an advance working party. The latter drew ten days' provisions from the supply boat Decotah and immediately proceeded to the Yazoo.

After drawing rations and ammunition, the Second Division of Sherman's corps left Young's Point on March 17. The division was to debark at Eagle Bend, a landing on the east side of the Mississippi River, and march over a narrow neck of land separating the river from Steele's Bayou. The command would then embark on transports which would carry them up the bayou. Table 13 shows the ammunition and rations

²⁸Q.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. III, 127.

the expedition would have required in order to satisfy Grant's and Sherman's orders.²⁹

Table 13.--Ammunition and Ration Requirements for Stuart's Division, Steele's Bayou Expedition

Strength	Small Arms Ammunition	Rations
6,916	553,280	124,488

Supplies for the division were stored aboard the steamer Silver Wave. Brigadier General Stuart, commanding the division, appointed a field grade officer along with a detail from each regiment to guard the stores aboard the steamboat. The field grade officer eventually assumed some quartermaster duties and was complemented for his work in Stuart's after action report.³⁰

The Confederates frustrated Porter's plan to navigate the backwaters of the Delta by rapidly concentrating a striking force to hem in the Union gunboats. In order to extract the gunboats from the converging Confederate forces, Sherman had to rush a relief expedition to the navy's rescue. After a harrowing escape, Porter decided to abandon any further attempts to ascend the narrow waterways of the

²⁹Regimental reports show that most units marched with one or two days' cooked rations in their haversacks and an additional five days' rations stored aboard the accompanying steamboats. Small arms ammunition calculated at eighty rounds per soldier. Q.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. III, 163, 445, 453.

³⁰Ibid., 438.

Delta. In his official report to Washington, Porter cited the exhaustion of his troops as the reason. He was also persuaded by logistics. The expedition had lost a coal barge and the "provision vessel could not get through, being too high."³¹

Unlike the expedition through Steele's Bayou, Porter's Mississippi squadron served Grant in several useful ways. One important service was protecting Grant's supply lines with naval vessels. Confederates partisans had been attacking Union shipping along the Mississippi River and were successful in capturing and torching several steamboats. Captain J. H. McGehee, a Confederate officer commanding a company of partisans, destroyed several Union supply vessels near Memphis. In a letter detailing the damage caused by his activities, he wrote:

On the 6th day of January I captured the steamboat Jacob Musselman . . . ran her to Bradley's Landing . . . where I captured another boat loaded with [live] stock. After taking what was valuable on the steamer . . . and the stock off the flatboat, I burned them both.

On the 11th day of January I captured the the steamboat Grampus No. 2 . . . and burned her. There were with Grampus five coal boats, which were turned loose in the river . . . and sunk.

On the 17th of February I captured the steam tug Hercules and seven coal boats which were with her, and burned them on the spot"

On the 16th of February I captured a flatboat . . . laden with medicine. She had on board the following articles . . . 600 ounces of quinine, 200 ounces of morphine, 6 pounds of opium, 5 pounds of ipecac, 5 navy repeaters, 450 rounds of navy cartridges, 3,000 percussion caps, and 6 pairs of gantlets.³²

³¹O.R.N., Ser. I, Vol. 24, 477.

³²Ibid., 136.

In response to guerrilla activities Porter assigned a number of timber and tinclads to patrol the Mississippi. The ram Monarch operated off Greenville, Mississippi, protecting transports en route to Grant's army from harassment. In correspondence with the commanding officer of Monarch, Porter wrote, "I approve of your going to Cypress Bend; visit it whenever you can leave Greenville, and if possible get those field pieces that are firing on our boats." Porter's frustration with partisan activity ran high for he concluded his letter with a harsh reprisal for captured guerrillas. He wrote, "If you catch any party who fired on unarmed vessels hang them to the nearest tree."³³

To assist the Navy with its mission of protecting his supply lines, Grant provided infantry to accompany the gunboats. The infantry served as landing parties to flush partisans out of their hiding places along the banks of the Mississippi. They also punished citizens who harbored partisans. Joshua Bishop, commanding officer of the light-draft gunboat Linden, gave an account of how the Navy and infantry cooperated to keep Grant's supply lines safe. In a report to his immediate superior, Lieutenant Bishop wrote that after shelling the banks of the Mississippi River near Memphis, he landed a party of soldiers to break up a group of partisans. The infantry went ashore and "made prisoners of citizens . . . who had harbored guerrillas;

³³Ibid., 360.

burned several unoccupied houses, . . . exchanged shots with some mounted men, . . . and captured several shotguns, rifles, and revolvers. "34

Although Grant's attempts to gain a lodgement from which to attack Vicksburg failed, the logistics of his efforts appeared well-thought out. The quartermasters of the large Union depot at St. Louis provided tons of supplies for the Army of the Tennessee. Grant's own logisticians did the same from Memphis. Before Grant left Memphis, he had refitted his army with clothing, ammunition, and camp equipment. In correspondence with his subordinate commanders, Grant frequently addressed logistics. To those leading expeditions, he made recommendations on what to bring.

Like Grant, the commanders of these expeditions did not neglect supply matters. They sought to adequately provision their commands for the task at hand. At times supplies ran short. When this occurred, commanders resorted to impressment, foraging, and half-rations. Although they may have kept the soldiers fed, improvisations hindered tactical speed and contributed to Grant's failure at Yazoo Pass and Steele's Bayou.

Both Grant and Porter thought their lines of communication important enough to assign resources to protect them. An assortment of navy vessels patrolled the

³⁴Ibid., 135.

Mississippi, discouraging attacks on the steamers and barges supplying the army down river. Infantry posted on or nearby the vessels served as landing parties, chasing partisans and arresting those who aided them.

Although not perfect, the attentiveness to logistics had succeeded thus far in sustaining Grant's army deep in the Confederate heartland. This attentiveness allowed Grant the flexibility of remaining in Confederate territory and selecting an operational approach that eventually led to Vicksburg's surrender.

CHAPTER 5

UNVEXED TO THE SEA

General Grant sat at his desk aboard his headquarters boat moored at Milliken's Bend. Smoke curled up toward the ceiling from a cigar he clenched between his teeth. Oblivious to the activity of his busy headquarters, Grant reflected on the four attempts to turn the Confederates' position at Vicksburg. All of them had failed. His thoughts gradually turned from the past to the future. "How shall Vicksburg be taken?" he thought to himself.

In his cabin, now filled with the haze from a dozen smoked cigars, Grant contemplated three options. The first one was a direct attack against the Vicksburg defenses using an amphibious assault across the Mississippi River. Since the Union army would be subject to Confederate cannon and small arms fire the entire attack, Grant anticipated high casualties with this option. The second option was to retire to Memphis and then march down the central Mississippi railroads as the army had previously attempted. General Sherman, one of Grant's most trusted subordinates, strongly advocated this alternative and expressed his thoughts in a letter to Grant.¹ While Sherman's suggestion probably

¹O.R., Ser. I, Vol XXIV, pt. III, 179-80.

made the most military sense, Grant dismissed pulling back to Memphis because it would have signaled another Union defeat to the public. The third option was to concentrate the army at Milliken's Bend and then march south, establishing an advance base opposite Grand Gulf. The army would cross the Mississippi and transfer its operations to the east bank of the river below Vicksburg. Grant finally settled on the third option. A letter of his written on April 2 to Admiral Porter provided insight into his concept of operations and the method of supplying it. Grant wrote:

I am satisfied that one army corps with the aid of two gunboats can take and hold Grand Gulf until . . . I . . . can get my whole army there and make provision for supplying them.²

On March 29 Grant issued his orders for the army to move south, "moving no faster than supplies and ammunition could be transported to them."

Grant's decision to march south and cross the river below Vicksburg was not without risk. Several obstacles threatened the success of his plan. The meandering waterways on the Louisiana side of the river had to be bridged before troops and supplies could pass. Parts of the road running south from Richmond to New Carthage, the area in which Grant planned to stage his troops, were flooded. Grant recalled in his memoirs that the roads south were very bad. Many of them were scarcely above water. One section of the road was under

²Ibid., 168.

³Q.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. I, 46-7.

water for a distance of two miles. Boats had to be constructed to ferry troops over the washed out area. ⁴

Confederate cavalry prowling the Louisiana side of the Mississippi River also posed dangers to Grant's march south. The cavalry patrols shadowed Union movements, sniping at soldiers and providing intelligence to the Confederate commander at Grand Gulf. Grant knew the success of his operation hinged on disguising the main effort, so the Confederate cavalry was of particular concern to him. This concern was expressed in a letter to General McClernand, whose corps was leading the march south to New Carthage. Grant wrote that "This [cavalry] force . . . should be driven entirely out of the country, or captured."⁵

Supplying forces below Vicksburg would be another problem for Grant, particularly coal for the navy's gunboats. Earlier, Grant had asked for the Navy's cooperation in supporting an amphibious assault against Grand Gulf. Admiral Porter agreed to this but cautioned Grant that once the gunboats were down river, they could not be brought upstream again because of their underpowered engines. Supplies would have to be shipped to them. When Grant asked for the Navy's help, he believed he could transport the coal by way of a chain of waterways connecting Milliken's Bend and New Carthage. In order for this plan to work, the army

⁴Grant, Memoirs, 309.

⁵O.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. III, 239.

would have to cut a three mile canal to link the waterways. If the canal could be successfully cut, Grant could not only supply coal, but also secure his line of communications.

Anticipating the success of the canal, Grant requested Colonel Robert Allen, the chief quartermaster of St. Louis, to send an assortment of boats down river. Grant wanted "30 yawls, . . . not less than 25 flatboats . . . and . . . five tugs . . . for towing."⁶ The vessels were needed to move troops and supplies through the chain of bayous once the canal was finished. Colonel Allen was able to procure the smaller vessels without much trouble. The tugs were a different matter. Allen's transportation officer complained that Grant's request for tugs would be hard to fill, since "Almost everything of the boat line has already been pressed into service and sent south"⁷

As the Army of the Tennessee toiled away on the canal, Admiral Porter was preparing to run the Vicksburg defenses. Porter's flotilla consisted of seven gun boats, one ram, and three steamboats. The steamers were loaded with bales of hay, cotton, rations, and sacks of grain. This cargo had the dual purpose of protecting the boats' vital machinery and providing for the needs of the army at New Carthage. Captain William Gaster, a quartermaster officer

⁶John Y. Simon, ed., The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant, vol. 2 (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), 476.

⁷O.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. III, 172.

detailed to Grant's army in March, recalled how he "fitted up the boats and barges destined to run the blockade at Vicksburg." He barricaded the boats and barges with 708,500 pounds of oats, 34,658 pounds of corn, 1,240,048 pounds of hay, and 1,096 bales of cotton.⁸

By April 16 Admiral Porter was ready to run the Vicksburg defenses. With exception of his flagship, all of the vessels in Porter's flotilla towed coal barges. Each barge towed contained 10,000 bushels of coal. Lorenzo Thomas, an eyewitness to the passage of Porter's fleet, described running the Vicksburg gauntlet:

I ran down to Young's Point and took a position in full view of Vicksburg, about 4 miles distant in a straight line, to witness the passage of Admiral Porter's fleet of seven vessels, with three transports loaded with rations.

The head of this line nearly reached the upper batteries before being discovered. Fire was opened on them at 11 o'clock and continued until 2 The entire fleet passed with but little damage and small loss. . . . The Henry Clay . . . received a shot in the stern She caught fire, and then being helpless, the pilot took a plank and drifted by the burning mass nearly four hours, when he was picked up. The boat had on board 50,000 rations.⁹

With exception of the steamer Henry Clay, which was sunk by Confederate fire, all of the vessels passed the Vicksburg guns with only slight damage.

On the day after Porter passed the Vicksburg fortress Grant visited the army at New Carthage to check on its

⁸Quartermaster General, Annual Reports of Quartermaster Officers, 1863, vol. II, Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 713-16.

⁹Q.R.N. Ser. I, Vol. 24, 565-66.

progress. He was disappointed with what he saw. The water level in the bayous was falling, which would make the use of boats impractical, and the land over which the army would have to march over was not dry enough to travel on. Bridges had to be constructed over the bayous for troops to cross, which would slow the army's advance. McClelland's corps had already built two thousand feet of bridging by the time of Grant's visit. The engineers had problems permanently fastening these bridges because the rapid current in the bayous washed moorings away. The single road from Milliken's Bend to New Carthage was not adequate to support the army. Returning to Milliken's Bend, Grant summed up his visit by stating "the process of getting troops through in the way we were doing was so tedious that a better method must be devised."¹⁰ On this occasion Grant and McClelland agreed on the need for an alternative way of moving troops and supplies south.

Following Grant's visit, McClelland drafted a logistics estimate for the army's march south. He forecasted the ammunition requirements for gaining a foothold on the east bank of the Mississippi at 6,000,000 rounds for a force of 20,000 men. He also estimated a requirement of three hundred wagons to transport this amount of ammunition from Milliken's Bend to New Carthage, a trip of thirty-five miles. Since McClelland had only 150 wagons that could be made

¹⁰Grant, Memoirs, 309.

available, he estimated that moving the ammunition would take eight days. McClernand also figured a need for an additional ninety wagons to move artillery ammunition. With a required supply rate of three hundred rounds per gun, McClernand calculated that ninety wagons could move the ammunition for 10 six-gun batteries to New Carthage in three days. He concluded that moving enough infantry and artillery ammunition forward to support the river crossing would take a total of thirteen days.¹¹ Because the Confederates could be seen reinforcing artillery and gunpits south of Vicksburg, both Grant and McClernand agreed that any delay in operations was unacceptable.

To expedite the movement of supplies south, Grant decided to run the Vicksburg defenses again. This time, the flotilla would consist of ordinary transports and barges. Six steamers and twelve barges were loaded with 600,000 rations and a considerable amount of forage. On the night of April 22nd the transports with barges in tow ran the batteries. They did not fare as well as the passage on April 16. One transport and half the barges were sunk.¹²

On April 20 Grant fully committed himself to an amphibious operation south of Vicksburg. From his headquarters at Milliken's Bend, he published orders for the move south. The purpose of the move, the orders stated, was

¹¹O.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. III, 190.

¹²Grant, Memoirs, 314.

to "obtain a foothold on the east bank of the Mississippi River, from which Vicksburg can be approached by practicable roads." McClernand's corps would lead the way. McPherson's corps would follow. Sherman's would bring up the rear. The Army would travel light. Grant's orders allowed each company one tent to protect rations from the rain. Each regimental, brigade, and division headquarters could bring a wall tent. The troops would bivouac without shelter. To protect his lines of communication, Grant directed each corps commander to detail two regiments to guard the route from Richmond south. The sick and disabled would stay behind in hospitals established by the medical director. Those convalescents judged fit for duty by the surgeons running the hospitals would make up the guard force for the rear area. Each corps would take ten days' of rations for the march south. Grant authorized commanders to seize supplies along the line of march but ordered close control of impressment. Soldiers caught harassing citizens, destroying property, or searching homes without proper authorization faced punishment.¹³

Grant's plan of gaining a foothold across the Mississippi by way of Grand Gulf proved more difficult than expected. Admiral Porter called off the first attempt to take the fort when an informant gave him a highly exaggerated account of the enemy's strength there. Grant made a personal reconnaissance with Porter to see for himself and concluded

¹³Ibid., 310-12.

that if the army acted quickly, Grand Gulf would "easily fall." But the army couldn't act quickly. McClellan was having a terrible time trying to embark a division from New Carthage. Although he ordered one of his divisions to prepare for an amphibious landing in cooperation with the navy, McClellan wrote to Grant that he "was not prepared to make a sustained movement against the place." He cited muddy roads, ammunition shortages, and transportation deficiencies as the causes of his unpreparedness.¹⁴

Grant even had moments of doubt about the army's ability to shake its inertia. In a letter to General Sherman dated April 24, Grant voiced his concerns. One of them was the great difficulty in moving troops to embarkation sites along the Mississippi River. The levee connecting the army's forward staging area with the Mississippi was broken in several places, which flooded the intervening country. Although troops were shuttled over these areas aboard transports and barges, the process consumed valuable time. To compound this problem, the water level in the bayous were falling, making their navigation by steamboat impossible. Grant faced the possibility of supplying his army along a single road vulnerable to Confederate attack. Even with this road secure, there was a limit to the amount of supplies that could be transported on it. Grant knew that "the army could not be rationed by a wagon train over the single narrow and

¹⁴O.R., Ser. I, Vol XXIV, pt. III, 228-29; Grant, Memoirs, 314.

almost impassible road between Milliken's Bend and Perkins' Plantation." Grant worried about casualties, too. The Confederates had sunk a Union steamboat carrying medical supplies as it attempted to run the Vicksburg batteries, leaving the army "destitute of all preparations for taking care of wounded men." The agony of those injured would be prolonged as the only evacuation route to hospitals at Milliken's Bend was "an impossible one for the transportation of wounded men."¹⁵

On April 27 Grant issued his orders for the attack on Grand Gulf. The plan called for the navy to begin the assault. With their heavy guns, Union ironclads would knock out the enemy's batteries. Once the navy silenced the enemy's guns, McClernand would debark his troops to take possession of Grand Gulf's "commanding points." If the enemy should occupy positions back from the city and out of the range of the gunboats, McClernand would run the batteries and land at Rodney, twenty miles downstream. Grant's orders directed McClernand to have the soldiers "keep three days' rations in their haversacks, not to be touched until a movement commences."¹⁶

McClernand ordered his division commanders to take only the essentials along on the assault. The divisions would march without wagons and ambulances. These would be

¹⁵O.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. III, 231.

¹⁶Grant, Memoirs, 316-17.

ordered up later on. To resupply the troops with ammunition, McClernand ordered his division commanders to form details to haul ammunition from the transports to the field. Additional details would care for the wounded, since there would be no ambulances. Along with their three days' rations, troops would carry double the basic load of ammunition, or eighty rounds. McClernand's object was to maintain a foothold on the east bank of the Mississippi until "such time as preparations can be made and troops collected for a forward movement."¹⁷

On April 29 Porter attacked Confederate positions at Grand Gulf. For five and a half hours, the gunboats pounded the enemy's batteries. During the bombardment, McClernand's 10,000 men anxiously waited aboard steamers, ready to join the attack when given the signal. Two divisions of McPherson's XVII Corps were assembling in close support of McClernand's men, having been ordered by Grant to march to Hard Times.

The terrific bombardment from the Union gunboats did little to silence the Confederate batteries. Observing the action aboard a small tug, Grant decided to withdraw the gunboats, "seeing their efforts were entirely unavailing." With the Confederates' defenses still intact, Grant deemed the capture of Grand Gulf by frontal assault impossible. Undaunted by the failure of the ironclads to knock out the

¹⁷Q.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. III, 237, 239-40.

enemy's defenses, Grant determined to march his army further down the west side of the Mississippi and cross over to Rodney where a suitable landing had been found.¹⁸

To effect Grant's alternate plan, McClernand disembarked his troops at Hard Times under cover of darkness. His troops then marched south to De Shroon's plantation where they bivouacked for the night on April 29. Meanwhile, Porter prepared gunboats and transports to run the Grand Gulf blockade, which they successfully did that same evening. Early the next morning McClernand's corps and one division from McPherson's corps embarked on the transports that had run the batteries and "were speedily landed" on the east bank of the Mississippi at Bruinsburg. Grant chose to land at Bruinsburg because it had "a good road . . . to Port Gibson."

If this was any other campaign, Grant would have been concerned about the conditions under which he was operating. His army was strung out from Milliken's Bend to Bruinsburg, a distance of over sixty miles. The river to his back separated him from his base of supplies and reinforcements. The roads connecting the army to its base were in terrible shape, which caused problems with moving supplies, artillery, and infantry forward. Convoys traveling the muddy, deeply-rutted roads were lucrative targets for enemy raiding parties. The Confederates outnumbered the Union forces on

¹⁸Grant, Memoirs, 317-18.

the east side of the Mississippi River three to one. Even without superior numbers, the Confederates could use smaller forces to contain the Bruinsburg bridgehead since the terrain favored the defenders. Whatever Grant's previous worries may have been, they were momentarily forgotten when his troops landed on the east bank of the Mississippi River. In his memoirs Grant recalled:

When this was effected I felt a degree of relief scarcely ever equalled since. Vicksburg was not yet taken it is true, nor were its defenders demoralized by any of our previous moves. I was now in the enemy's country, with a vast river and the stronghold of Vicksburg between me and my base of supplies. But I was on dry ground on the same side of the river with the enemy. All the campaigns, labors, hardships, and exposures from the month of December previous to this time that had been made and endured, were for the accomplishment of this one object.¹⁹

Grant's elation quickly changed to exasperation when he found out that McClernand's men had not been issued rations at De Shroon's landing. Most of McClernand's corps had landed at Bruinsburg before noon, but the command was held up for nearly four hours to "draw and distribute three days' rations." By 4 P.M. McClernand's command, with exception of his cavalry which had not crossed the river, resumed the march, reaching the bluffs one mile west of Bruinsburg an hour before sunset. The delay could have spelled disaster for the bridgehead since the bluffs were a key piece of terrain.²⁰

¹⁹Ibid., 321.

²⁰O.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. I, 142-43; Grant, Memoirs, 322.

When Grant began his movement from Bruinsburg, his army marched without wagons, baggage, tents, or officers' horses. These items had been left west of the river in order for the troops and artillery to get across first. Never one to neglect logistics, Grant made arrangements to resupply his army with rations and ammunition until the supply trains could be brought up. In a letter to Colonel Bingham, chief quartermaster for the Department of Tennessee, Grant directed that "two tugs run the blockade, with two barges each in tow." The barges were to be filled to "nearly their capacity with rations." Bingham was to cover the tugs and barges with oats and hay to protect them from Confederate artillery fire. Grant's orders were urgent. Within forty-eight hours of receiving these instructions, he wanted Bingham to have the vessels ready to go.²¹

Bingham dutifully carried out Grant's instructions but several problems arose which delayed the departure of the tugs from Milliken's Bend. He could not get soldiers from General Steele, the commander of troops at Milliken's Bend, to load the barges and tugs. He also heard that enemy troops had landed only a few miles down river at Young's Point. Upon consulting with General Sherman, Bingham decided to delay the supplies until Sherman sent a force to occupy the Point. The supplies were further delayed when one of the barges sunk and another leaked so badly that it could not be

²¹O.R., Ser. 1, Vol. XXIV, pt. III, 248.

sent. After a four day delay Bingham sent one of the tugs with two barges in tow down the river. As the boats rounded De Soto Point, Confederate guns fired on the hapless vessels, setting the barges on fire. Bingham loaded up two more barges with rations but hesitated to send them without further instructions from Grant. Anticipating Grant's disappointment with these delays, Bingham reassuringly wrote Grant that "I am using every exertion to forward supplies in wagons and have sent to Memphis for more transportation."²²

Grant knew that his troops could supplement their diets with food taken from the country if rations ran short. This was not true with their ammunition, which would quickly be exhausted within an engagement or two. Upon landing at Bruinsburg, Grant seized all the draft animals and wagons in the vicinity and had them loaded "to their capacity with ammunition." Although he later remembered the train as a motley one, the improvisation allowed him to fill the troops' cartridge boxes emptied from several furious day-long clashes at Port Gibson.²³

After the battle of Port Gibson, Grant rapidly pushed his army eastward. By May 3, elements of the Army of the Tennessee had crossed the bayous east of the town. This action threatened to isolate the Confederates at Grand Gulf and compelled them to evacuate the city before Grant could

²²O.R., Ser. 1, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, 688-89.

²³Grant, Memoirs, 326.

cut off their escape route. To pressure the enemy's withdrawal, Grant called upon McClernand to bring his corps up from Port Gibson to cooperate with McPherson's XVII Corps, which had been halted by a strong Confederate rear guard left behind to protect the withdrawal. Concerned with the security of "all the roads to the rear," Grant directed McClernand to leave one division behind to guard the bridges spanning the bayous near Port Gibson as well as the roads south of Grindstone Ford.²⁴

McClernand complained that he could not move to support the XVII Corps because of traffic congestion and logistics shortages. McClernand wrote that he was "closed up in the rear of the long train attached to the Seventeenth Corps." If Grant thought it was necessary to have the two corps within supporting distance of each other, he would have to order the long train out of McClernand's way. McClernand complained of supply shortages, especially rations. The provisions his troops drew at Bruinsburg were almost gone. McClernand accused the officer in charge of transportation with favoritism, for "the baggage of that corps [XVII Corps] is being sent forward, to the exclusion of ammunition and provisions for the Thirteenth Army Corps."²⁵ McClernand protested that without provisions and ammunition, he could not be held responsible for failing to support Grant's plans.

²⁴O.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. III, 265-66.

²⁵Ibid., 270.

Grant was not impressed with McClernand's logic for he himself had been without his headquarters' trains for several days.

When Grant learned on the night of May 2 the Confederates had evacuated Grand Gulf, he hastened to that town, arriving there with an escort of cavalry the following day. The first thing Grant did at Grand Gulf was to get a bath, borrow some fresh underclothing, and eat a good meal on board Porter's flagship, the Navy having occupied the town that same morning. Grant then wrote several letters to catch up on his correspondence before departing for Hankinson's Ferry, twelve miles northeast of Grand Gulf. The contents of these letters explained his next step in the campaign against Vicksburg.

Grant wrote one of these letters to General Halleck, informing him of the army's "present position" and notifying him what the next move would be. In the letter Grant stated, "I shall not bring my troops into this place [Grand Gulf] but immediately follow the enemy" ²⁶

Grant's original plan up until occupying Grand Gulf was to secure that town as a base from which to operate, detach McClernand's corps to General Banks to cooperate in the reduction of Port Hudson, and then combine both forces to attack Vicksburg. Grant scrapped the last two parts of this plan when he learned that Banks was moving up the Red River

²⁶O.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. I, 33.

instead of up the Mississippi. Making a logistics estimate of the situation, Grant concluded that he would have to wait at least thirty days before Banks' could cooperate with him. Even with Banks' help, reinforcements "would not have reached ten thousand men after deducting casualties and necessary river guards" Grant figured that by the time both forces were ready to move against Vicksburg, the enemy "would have strengthened his position and been reinforced by more men than Banks could have brought." Grant decided to continue the campaign without Banks' help.²⁷

In his recollection of moving independently of Banks in his memoirs, Grant also wrote about cutting loose from his base. His remembrances several years after the event and his correspondence from Grand Gulf while events were unfolding are contradictory. In a letter dated May 3 Grant directed Sherman to collect a train of 120 wagons from Milliken's Bend and Perkins' Plantation and forward them to Grand Gulf. Once at Grand Gulf the wagons were to be loaded with "one hundred thousand pounds of bacon, the balance coffee, sugar, salt, and hard bread."²⁸ In a letter to General Halleck on the same day Grant wrote, "The country will provide all the forage required for anything like an active campaign. Other supplies will have to be drawn from Milliken's Bend." Though the land line from Milliken's Bend to Grand Gulf was

²⁷Grant, Memoirs, 328.

²⁸O.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. III, 268.

sixty-three miles long, Grant felt confident that the army could survive on the supplies hauled over this route.²⁹

To reduce the distance between his army and its base of supplies at Milliken's Bend, Grant urged General Sullivan, the commander of troops guarding the supply route on the west side of the Mississippi River, to shorten the line of communication. Grant directed Sullivan to build a road "from Young's Point to a landing just below Warrenton [Bower's Landing]" just as soon as the water level of the river fell low enough to allow construction to start.³⁰

The army's tactical operations from May 4 through May 6 contradict Grant's claim of cutting loose from his base. Upon establishing his headquarters at Hankinson's Ferry on the morning of May 4, Grant issued orders to McClernand and McPherson to have their corps stay where they were until supplies could be brought forward. In the orders Grant stated that Grand Gulf was now the army's base of supplies and that all supplies south of Perkins' Plantation were "ordered to that point."³¹

Grant also sent a note to Colonel Hillyer, the new commander at Grand Gulf, to forward supplies to the army promptly. Grant wrote, "Movements here are delayed for want of ammunition and stores. Every days delay is worth two

²⁹Q.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. I, 33.

³⁰Q.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. III, 268.

³¹Simon, Papers of Ulysses S. Grant, vol. 8, 156.

thousand men to the enemy. Give this your personal attention."³²

In a letter to General Halleck on May 6, Grant explained further why his army had not moved for two days. Far from leaving his base of supplies, Grant stated:

Ferrying and transportation of rations to Grand Gulf is detaining us on the Black River. I will move as soon as three days rations received and send wagons back to the Gulf for more to follow.³³

Grant's concern for his base of supplies was certainly revealed when he ordered his chief subsistence officer to report the status of rations at Milliken's Bend. In a report dated May 8, Lieutenant Colonel Robert MacFeely informed Grant that since May 2 the Union depot at Milliken's Bend had shipped over "300,000 rations of hard bread, coffee, sugar, and salt, 225,000 rations of salt meat, and 130,000 of soap" to the Army of the Tennessee. MacFeely also reported nearly two million complete rations on hand with "a half million more en route." He set his stockage objective for rations at three million, which he expected to achieve within a week. He assured Grant that the commissaries "were working day and night when there were any [stores] to be loaded," and promised use every exertion to keep the army supplied.³⁴

Reports from other quartermaster officers in the Army of the Tennessee tell of similar exertions to keep Grant's

³²Ibid., 162.

³³Ibid., 169.

³⁴Q.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. III, 281-82.

army supplied after it had crossed the Mississippi River Captain G. A. Pierce, a quartermaster officer on Lieutenant Colonel Bingham's staff, wrote:

A supply train was organized under my direction of three hundred teams for service between these points [Milliken's Bend and Bower's Landing] and by great exertion we enabled to send forward sufficient supplies to permit the army to proceed without interruption.

I proceeded as directed from that time forward to the date of the surrender to supply the immense army engaged with everything requisite to enable the General commanding to succeed in his undertaking.³⁵

Captain John L. Woods, a quartermaster officer in Sherman's corps, arrived at Hard Times on May 7. Upon arriving at the landing, he found "five hundred teams belonging to the 13th and 17th Army Corps waiting to cross." Crossing over to Grand Gulf, Captain Woods found two badly damaged barges that had run the Vicksburg batteries. He repaired the boats using the engineer unit attached to the division. Once the vessels were repaired, Captain Woods, "with a great deal of difficulty," used them to cross his wagons over the Mississippi River.³⁶

Grant's letters and the reports of his quartermaster officers present a more accurate picture of Grant's supply lines, which remained intact, than his recollections years later. Table 14 shows the quantity of ammunition and rations

³⁵Quartermaster General, Annual Reports of Quartermaster Officers, 1863, vol. IV, Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 617-33.

³⁶Quartermaster General, Annual Reports of Quartermaster Officers, 1863, vol. V, Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 911-17.

Grant would have needed to resupply the XIII and XVII Army Corps during their halt following the Battle of Port Gibson.³⁷

Table 14.--Ammunition and Rations Required by Grant's Forces East of the Mississippi River, May 6, 1863

Command	Present for duty	Small Arms Ammunition	Rations
Thirteenth Army Corps			
Headquarters.....	402	80,400	2,412
Ninth Division.....	4,634	926,800	41,706
Tenth Division.....	4,574	914,800	41,166
Twelfth Division.....	5,483	1,096,600	49,434
Fourteenth Division.....	4,662	932,400	41,958
Seventeenth Army Corps			
Headquarters.....	89	17,800	801
Third Division.....	7,076	1,415,200	63,684
Sixth Division.....	4,582	916,400	41,238
Seventh Division.....	5,735	1,147,000	51,615
Engineer Troops.....	602		5,418
Total.....	37,839	7,567,800	340,551

Grant's concern for his lines of communication resulted in his asking the navy for assistance in protecting

³⁷Troop strength based on the abstract of return, Department of the Tennessee, April 30, 1863. *Q.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. III, 248. Small arms ammunition based on 200 rounds per soldier. Rations based on Grant's guidance to his corps commanders, which was three days' in each man's haversack. *Ibid.*, 280. Since Grant directed his corps commanders to send all the wagons they could spare back to Grand Gulf for more supplies, the actual amount of ammunition and rations would have been higher. *Ibid.* Artillery ammunition would have amounted to 52,800 rounds. This calculation is based on 22 six-gun batteries at 400 rounds per gun. *Ibid.*, 250-59.

them. Grant wanted one boat posted at the mouth of Big Black River to keep watch on any enemy movement in that direction. He also wanted a naval vessel stationed at Grand Gulf to guard the stores there and to escort steamers crossing the river. To prevent the enemy from striking his army's supply bases at Milliken's Bend and Young's Point, Grant asked to have the remaining two ironclads positioned near Warrenton to watch the enemy troops there. If Grant had truly cut loose from his base, there would not have been any need for the ironclads' protection.³⁸

When his army resumed its march on May 7 Grant ruled out approaching Vicksburg from the south for two reasons. First, the broken nature of the ground favored the Confederates. Second, even if Grant were successful in the south, the Vicksburg garrison could escape north through the watershed of the Yazoo and Big Black Rivers. Allowing the Vicksburg garrison to escape and fight another day was not to Grant's liking, therefore he focused his advance east of the city.³⁹

Skirting east of Vicksburg offered Grant several advantages. He could deny the Confederates access to supplies and reinforcements from Jackson and elsewhere if the rails east of the town were severed. Grant could also hide his true intentions from the enemy, since the Confederates

³⁸Ibid., 272.

³⁹Grant, Memoirs, 330.

would not be able to easily tell whether Grant's main effort was against Jackson, the state capitol of Mississippi, or Vicksburg. Furthermore, marching east gave Grant flexibility because he could easily turn either town into his main attack.

As the right flank of Grant's army closed in on the town of Raymond on May 11, correspondence between commanders showed the supply line from Grand Gulf still intact. Writing from his headquarters at Cayuga, Mississippi, Grant informed Sherman that "about two hundred wagons are loaded, and will leave for the front to-day, escorted by two regiments." Grant assured another corps commander that "one train of wagons is now arriving" and another could be expected soon. Strong guard forces were detached to protect supply wagons moving up from Grand Gulf. In a letter dated May 12, Grant ordered General McClernand to provide an entire division to escort two supply trains until they safely reached the army. Wagon trains traveling with each of the corps also received special attention. McClernand assigned two infantry regiments, a battery of artillery, and a company of cavalry to guard his trains. Sherman provided similar security for his trains as he prepared his corps to march toward Jackson.⁴⁰

After the battle at Raymond on May 12, Grant decided to turn the entire army toward Jackson. By attacking the

⁴⁰Simon, Papers of Ulysses S. Grant, vol. 8, 203; O.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. III, 294-97, 308.

town, Grant hoped to destroy an enemy force collecting there and cut Vicksburg off from its primary supply route. The move was not without risk. In order to move his entire army against Jackson, Grant had to concentrate his corps so they would be within supporting distance of one another. He ordered McClernand's corps to withdraw from its position and move to Raymond. This task posed a danger to this corps since it exposed its rear and flank to an attack from the enemy. The move toward Jackson extended Grant's line of communication, which made the task of moving supplies forward more vulnerable to interdiction. Grant considered this last danger an acceptable risk. In his memoirs he recalled:

But by moving a force against Jackson, I uncovered my own communication. So I finally decided to have none--to cut loose altogether from my base and move my whole force eastward. I then had no fears for my communications, and if I moved quickly enough could turn upon Pemberton before he could attack me in the rear.⁴¹

To assume Grant moved without supplies during this part of the campaign is to underestimate him. Grant continued to supply his army from items drawn from Grand Gulf. The amount of transportation available to bring supplies forward was also adequate. In one letter Grant chastised McClernand for complaining of transportation shortages. Grant wrote that he had passed some of the corps' units and the transportation with them would "carry the essential parts of five days' rations . . . if relieved of the knapsacks, officers, soldiers, and negroes now riding."

⁴¹Grant, Memoirs, 332.

Grant admonished McClernand to make do with the means available.

Grant's other two corps apparently had enough wagons to carry five days' rations for equal "facilities had been given each of the army corps in all respects."⁴² Grant planned to carry only the essentials--food, ammunition, and medical supplies--and move quickly enough to defeat the enemy before these supplies gave out.

If Grant's statement on equal distribution of wagons is accurate, then the number of wagons the Union army had on the east side of the Mississippi can be calculated by using Table 15. Table 15 provides an extract of equipment from the annual report of Lieutenant Colonel J. Dunlap, the quartermaster officer of the XIII Army Corps.⁴³ This table also shows the supplies his wagons could hypothetically haul.

Table 15.--General Supply Wagons of the XIII Army Corps
May 13, 1863

Command (Troop Strength)	Horses/ Mules	Wagons	Distance to Base	Transportation Capability
XIII Army Corps (26,419).....	3,240	540	60 Miles	827,280 lbs

⁴²Q.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. III, 289.

⁴³Quartermaster General, Annual Reports of Quartermaster Officers, 1863, vol. V, Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 761-64.

For a single trip without the general supply trains returning to base, the XIII Army Corps could carry eight days' of supplies. A return trip would reduce the days of supply to six.⁴⁴

As the Army of the Tennessee converged on Jackson, Grant's corps commanders published instructions for the resupply of their units and the protection of their wagon trains. In Sherman's corps, division commanders were to have two ambulances and an ammunition wagon follow each regiment. All other wagons and vehicles were to be placed under the charge of a quartermaster officer and massed in the division's rear with a guard attached. If danger threatened the wagons, the quartermaster officer in charge would move them off the road to safety.⁴⁵

In McClelland's corps, each division commander was to retain five empty wagons and send the rest to the rear. The ambulances, baggage, and ammunition trains that assembled there would use an alternate route so that they would not slow down the command's withdrawal from Edwards Station. To

⁴⁴Distance from base reported as distance of corps vanguard from Grand Gulf as of May 13, 1863. Rate of travel was twenty-four miles per day, with daily consumption rates set at twenty-six pounds of forage for horses and mules. Army wagons were assumed to haul 2,000 pounds apiece, with each army wagon having a team of six horses. Sample calculation: (Number of wagons) x (hauling capacity of wagon) - (forage consumed per day per animal) x (number of animals) x (days to travel 60 miles) = transportation capability for a single trip without return. Days' of supply calculated at three pounds of rations and one pound of ammunition and other items per man per day. Huston, Sinews of War, 215.

⁴⁵Q.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. III, 308.

ensure responsive ammunition resupply, each of McClernand's division commanders assigned an officer to his ordnance train. McClernand also directed that each soldier carry eighty rounds of ammunition and three days' rations in haversacks. The commander of the Tenth Division received the additional duty of providing a detachment to protect the trains in the rear.⁴⁶

After a brief but sharp fight at Jackson on May 14, Union soldiers occupied the town. On that same day Grant intercepted a Confederate dispatch which detailed a plan to concentrate forces to defeat the Army of the Tennessee. Grant quickly responded to this new threat by sending two of his corps to Bolton, twenty miles west of Jackson. Sherman's corps remained at Jackson to complete the destruction of anything of military use.⁴⁷

As soon as Grant's corps commanders received orders to move toward Bolton, they busied themselves with preparations for the march. Several regiments in McPherson's corps resupplied themselves with three days' rations of sugar, bacon, and meal. The division's quartermaster officer had obtained these items from a Jackson prison. McClernand's corps, already marching toward Bolton, had divided its supply train in order to speed up the rate of march. Part of the train was sent along the Jackson road while the other part

⁴⁶Ibid., 306.

⁴⁷Grant, Memoirs, 339.

travelled on the Clinton road. McClernand directed his division commanders to leave their baggage trains in the rear of the formations so they would be out of the way.⁴⁸

Left behind to complete the destruction of military items in Jackson, Sherman received orders to move his corps a day sooner than expected. Upon receiving these orders, Sherman instructed his subordinate commanders and quartermasters to ready all the wagons. The wagons would leave Jackson at daybreak on May 16 while the rest of the corps finished destroying Confederate military equipment in town. The corps and its supply trains would link up at Mississippi Springs and from there continue on to Bolton.

Lumbering along the roads to Bolton, the supply wagons became a headache for Grant. The wagons were in the way of the combat troops when the right flank of the army made contact with the Confederates at Champion Hill. The first hint of trouble came from McPherson, who wrote to Grant, urging him to "come to the front as soon as you can." Grant was soon on his way. Upon reaching the front, Grant found Hovey's wagon trains blocking the Clinton road. The roadblock prevented McPherson's corps from reinforcing the right flank. Without hesitating, Grant "ordered all quartermasters and wagon masters to draw their teams to one side and make room for the passage of troops."⁴⁹ He also

⁴⁸Q.R. Ser. I, Vol XXIV, pt. I, 730.

⁴⁹Ibid., 52.

sent a dispatch to Sherman, who was still at Jackson, to move his troops within supporting distance of the units in heaviest contact with the Confederates.

The urgency of Grant's dispatch caused Sherman to change his order of march. Instead of the supply trains leading, Sherman placed the combat troops first, followed closely by the ammunition trains and ambulances, which were to follow their brigades. The supply trains would bring up the rear of the corps. To protect these trains, Sherman had his division commanders place all "the tired and foot-sore" troops under the charge of a competent officer who would remain with the wagons.⁵⁰ As Sherman hurried his troops along the Jackson road, the battle at Champion Hill was escalating into a full-fledged fight.

The last large supply train left Grand Gulf for the Army of the Tennessee one day prior to the fight at Champion Hill. General Blair, commanding the Second Division of Sherman's corps, had been tasked to escort this supply train, which consisted of two hundred wagons, to Grant's army in the field. Blair arrived at Raymond on the evening of May 15, noting in a report that the wagons and his own supply train had delayed his march. At Raymond he received an order from Grant to march his division to Edwards Station to support the army's left flank, which he did the following morning. Subsequent reports from Blair and his brigade commanders do

⁵⁰Q.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. III, 320

not mention anything more about the two hundred supply wagons. The wagons were most likely left behind at Raymond with a small escort to look after their safety.⁵¹

By the time Blair closed with the left flank of the Army of the Tennessee, the fighting at Champion Hill had developed into a major engagement. The Union's right flank bore the brunt of the battle, specifically Hovey's division and the two divisions from McPherson's corps that supported him. Hovey's division was engaged throughout the entire fight, losing more than one-third of its number. Several of his units ran short of ammunition. One brigade collapsed when it ran entirely out of ammunition. Brigadier General George F. McGinnis, the commander of that brigade, wrote that after fighting three hours and expending all his ammunition, his brigade had to "rely upon what they could get from the boxes of the dead and wounded." Sent to reinforce McGinnis's brigade, a commander from another unit arrived too late to help and observed, "We came up to the immediate scene of action, marching by the left . . . under the protection of a high ridge, over which our overpowered forces, with broken ranks, were already retreating."⁵²

The reinforcements shoring up the Union's right flank were from McPherson's corps. Like Hovey's brigades, some of these units ran short of ammunition in the bitter fighting.

⁵¹O.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. II, 254.

⁵²O.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. II, 56, 315.

Lieutenant Colonel Ezekiel S. Simpson, commanding the 5th Iowa, reported that his unit ran low on ammunition but continued to fire away with "what they could obtain from the cartridge boxes of the dead and wounded lying around them." Simpson continued to fight for another thirty minutes and then moved his command back into an open field "where General Logan had a supply of ammunition along his line, and filled the cartridge boxes."⁵³

A Confederate counterattack that recaptured the crest of Champion Hill almost spelled disaster for Grant's right flank. The attack came within six hundred yards of the ordnance train General Logan had brought forward. If the Confederates had captured the ammunition train, they would have deprived Grant's right flank of desperately needed ammunition. Because the Confederates were having supply problems of their own, they were not able to press the attack and eventually yielded the crest of Champion Hill to a Union counterattack. Pressured from the front and in danger of being cut off, the Confederates withdrew from Champion Hill and established new defensive positions along Big Black River, about twelve miles east of Vicksburg.

Grant kept the pressure on the Confederates as they withdrew from Champion Hill, hoping to cut off their escape east of Big Black River. The night of May 16 found McPherson's command camped two to six miles west of Champion

⁵³Ibid., 315.

Hill. McClernand had two of his divisions at Edwards Station. Having left Jackson with the last of his troops on May 16, Sherman reached Bolton late that evening. From Bolton, Sherman marched his corps to Bridgeport, a town eleven miles north of the Confederate bridgehead at Big Black River. Grant intended to unhinge the Confederate defense along the river by fixing them with a force to their front while using Sherman's corps to outflank their positions. Grant scrapped this plan when a premature charge by the forces which were to fix the Confederates successfully ruptured their defenses.⁵⁴

The Confederate defenses along Big Black River quickly collapsed after being penetrated. Seventeen hundred Confederate prisoners were taken east of Big Black when the bridges spanning the river were prematurely torched by the retreating defenders.

As the Confederates withdrew to the defenses around Vicksburg, Grant ordered Big Black River bridged. He instructed his corps commanders to immediately cross the infantry and artillery with their ammunition wagons and ambulances once the bridges were finished. Supply wagons were to wait until all the troops and artillery had passed. Always mindful of logistics, Grant directed each corps commander to leave behind a brigade to guard the crossing sites and the wagon trains. The brigades left behind would

⁵⁴Grant, Memoirs, 349.

escort the wagon trains across the bridges, providing for their security.⁵⁵

By May 18, the Army of the Tennessee had closed with the Confederate defenses around Vicksburg itself. These defenses ran for several miles, starting at the hairpin bend of the Mississippi River just above the town and following the high ground to the east and south for nine miles until they reached the muddy low lands below.⁵⁶

As his army took up positions around the Mississippi citadel, Grant's first anxiety was not how to attack the fortress, but securing a base of supplies along the Yazoo River from which to supply his army. In his memoirs Grant recalled that his anxiety led him to ride as far forward as the advanced skirmishers. Upon reaching the hills just north of Vicksburg, Grant was shot at by a few enemy skirmishers still making their way to Vicksburg. Undaunted by the retreating enemy skirmishers and now accompanied by General Sherman, Grant continued on to the top of Walnut Hills. As he looked down from the top of those hills so hotly contested five months ago, he saw the looped course of the Yazoo River below. It was an emotional moment for both generals. ⁵⁷

On May 20 the Army of the Tennessee was in contact with new bases of supply. Sherman's and McPherson's corps

⁵⁵O.R., Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. III, 324.

⁵⁶Bruce Catton, Grant Moves South (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960), 448.

⁵⁷Grant, Memoirs, 354-55.

were supplied from steamboats moored at landings near the mouth of Chickasaw Bayou. Captain John Field, a quartermaster officer in McPherson's corps, wrote:

About May 20 after the evacuation of the enemy from Haynes' Bluff, the fleet of transports was ordered to the mouth of Chickasaw Bayou on the Yazoo River from which point and Snyder's Bluff I continued to supply the divisions until the surrender of Vicksburg.⁵⁸

Captain John L. Woods, a supply officer in Sherman's corps, reported:

By forced marches, the corps to which I belonged arrived in sight of the rebel works in the rear of Vicksburg on the forenoon of the 19th. Communication was established the same day with our transportation at the mouth of the Chickasaw Bayou on the Yazoo River about ten miles distant. All of our land transportation was immediately sent to the landing for supplies, which were much needed. These were promptly forwarded with little difficulty. The roads from our starting point to the rear of Vicksburg were in the very best condition.⁵⁹

Occupying the left flank of the Army of the Tennessee, McClernand's corps was cared for by supplies arriving from Warrenton. Wagons hauled supplies from Sherman's Landing, three miles below Young's Point, to Bowers' Landing, located on the west bank of the Mississippi River. Steamboats then carried the supplies across the river to Warrenton. Wagons finished the trip by transporting the supplies from Warrenton to the soldiers in the field. When the Confederates threatened Sherman's Landing in mid-June,

⁵⁸Quartermaster General, Annual Reports of Quartermaster Officers, 1863, vol. II, Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 517-20.

⁵⁹Quartermaster General, Annual Reports of Quartermaster Officers, 1863, vol. V, Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 911-17.

Captain John T. Allen, the quartermaster responsible for supplying the XIII Corps, requested to move his base of supplies from Warrenton to Chickasaw Bayou. He obtained permission to make the desired change and began supplying the corps from Chickasaw Bayou on June 10.

Although the siege of Vicksburg would take another month to complete, Grant now had ample supplies to maintain his army in front of the city until it fell. He even called in reinforcements, swelling his ranks to seventy thousand troops. As the noose around Vicksburg tightened, General Pemberton, the garrison's commander, gave up any hopes of escape. On July 4th, he accepted Grant's terms of surrender. When the Confederate garrison marched out of the city at the appointed time, Grant recalled that the Union soldiers, having been on full rations throughout the entire siege, shared their bread with the enemy. This final episode describes Grant's logistics of the overall campaign more accurately than any other account.⁶⁰

⁶⁰Grant, Memoirs, 379.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

The importance of Vicksburg has often led writers to compete with one another in embellishing the facts of the campaign. This certainly has been the case in describing the logistics of the Vicksburg campaign. Many historians have fallen victim to focusing on the few days Grant appeared to have cut loose from his base of supplies as he marched inland. This has been done at the expense of understanding the overall role logistics played in the campaign. In some cases the accounts of those actually present during the conflict have added to the general misunderstanding of how the Army of the Tennessee supplied itself. Through the primary accounts of campaign participants, this thesis has provided a more comprehensive description of how the Army of the Tennessee was supplied. Here are some of the conclusions of this thesis.

The first conclusion is that the logistics effort of the Vicksburg campaign was enormous. In the past, historians have neglected to say much about this effort, choosing instead to write on Grant's operations east of Vicksburg. But logistics was how Grant maintained his operational flexibility throughout the entire campaign. Prior to moving

his headquarters from Memphis to Milliken's Bend, Grant refitted the Army of the Tennessee from stocks at his Memphis depot. Refitting his army enabled him to move the bulk of his forces down river to continue the campaign. The depot at Memphis issued Grant's army 5,127 horses, 3,739 mules, 434 wagons, and 7 million pounds of forage. The depot at Memphis also provided 26 million rounds of small arms ammunition and almost 7 million rations for the troops. The logistics effort was complicated by the long line of communication Grant would have to protect and transport supplies over. The length of the campaign, the amount of supplies furnished to Grant's army, and the extended line of communication over which supplies travelled made Vicksburg one of the largest logistics operations in the Civil War.

Grant established a forward base of supplies upon reaching Milliken's Bend. This base stockpiled supplies arriving from St. Louis and Memphis. The supplies issued from Milliken's Bend to the Army of the Tennessee supports the conclusion that Vicksburg was a major logistical effort. The base at Milliken's Bend forwarded 667 horses, 2,573 mules, 15,000 pairs of shoes, 1,400 pairs of boots, 27,000 pants, 15,000 blankets, and over 9 million pounds of forage to Grant's army. The supply base also stocked three million rations for the soldiers and all the ammunition shipped south for the army. The logistics effort of the campaign was ably summed up by Captain G.A. Pierce, the quartermaster officer in charge of Young's Point. He stated:

The labor required during the forty-seven days of the siege was immense, and it was not surprising that many officers of this Department were obliged when the victory was gained . . . to quit their post and return to their homes with health seriously impaired. They were literally broken down with work.¹

The second conclusion of this thesis differs from the one Dr. James A. Huston drew about the Vicksburg campaign in his massive study of logistics entitled The Sinews of War: Army Logistics 1775-1953.² Dr. Huston stated that Grant saved manpower by freeing himself from his lines of communication. On the contrary, Grant was very concerned about his lines of communication and assigned forces to protect them. Grant used naval gunboats to protect his operational lines of communication. He also assigned infantry escorts to these vessels to act as landing parties. Grant used entire divisions to protect his tactical lines of communication. He assigned Blair's division to protect a supply train of two hundred wagons coming up from Grand Gulf. Grant's corps commanders also assigned forces to protect tactical lines of communication. Without exception, corps commanders addressed the location of their supply wagons in marching orders and often tasked one or more regiments to protect these trains from harm. Corps commanders took other precautionary measures to protect their supplies, such as sending their trains along secure routes.

¹Quartermaster General, Annual Reports of Quartermaster Officers, 1863, vol. IV, Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 617-33.

²Huston, Sinews of War, 231.

A third conclusion of this thesis is that Grant's account of the logistics of the campaign as stated in his memoirs is not entirely accurate. Contrary to what Grant wrote in his later years, the Army of the Tennessee was supplied from the stores brought up from its base of supplies throughout the entire campaign. Upon landing at Bruinsburg, the Army of the Tennessee drew its initial supplies from the steamboats that ferried the first Union regiments across the Mississippi River. The army was resupplied again on May 6 when units came dangerously close to running out of rations. These supplies were brought forward from Grand Gulf. The army was supplied a third time a few days later when Sherman arrived with the 120 wagons that Grant had ordered forward from Milliken's Bend on May 3. On May 15 General Blair's division arrived at Raymond with another two hundred wagons. From May 15 through May 19 the general trains of the corps continued to supply the soldiers with items that had been drawn from Grand Gulf.

Although Grant believed he had cut loose from his base, his quartermaster officers thought otherwise. Colonel John Bingham, the senior quartermaster officer of Grant's army, wrote:

During the march of the army from Milliken's Bend, Louisiana, to Vicksburg, Mississippi, via Grand Gulf, Port Gibson, and Jackson, I was engaged in opening lines of communication and forwarding supplies to the army.³

³Quartermaster General, Annual Reports of Quartermaster Officers, 1863, vol. I, Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 291-95.

Captain John T. Allen, a quartermaster officer with McClernand's corps, echoed Colonel Bingham's description of the campaign. Captain Allen stated:

The corps [XIII Army Corps] had then crossed the Mississippi River at Grand Gulf and commenced its victorious march for Jackson while its supplies were forwarded by wagons from Milliken's Bend to Perkins Landing, Louisiana, a distance of 40 miles and there reshipped to Grand Gulf, Mississippi, on steamboats which had run the blockade of the Vicksburg batteries The forwarding of the supplies taxed our means of transportation to its utmost capacity⁴

Based upon the quantity of supplies needed to equip and feed the Army of the Tennessee, Grant's concern for his lines of communication, the inability to draw certain supplies from the countryside, and primary accounts from the army's quartermaster officers, this thesis concludes that Grant did not cut loose from his base as stated but supplied his army with items drawn from one base or another throughout the campaign.

Does the logistics of the Vicksburg campaign hold any lessons for today? This thesis concludes there are several lessons and will highlight four of them.

The first lesson is equivalence. Equivalence states that operations, tactics, and logistics are of equal importance. To influence one is to influence the other two. Grant learned this the hard way with the destruction of his supply base at Holly Springs and the railroads north of that town. After the Holly Springs incident, Grant had to change

⁴Ibid., 33-40.

his operational plans because he could not support them. As a result, Sherman's attack at Chickasaw Bayou was left unsupported. Logistics influenced Grant's operational plans and contributed to Sherman's tactical failure down river.

The second lesson is external support for logistics. External support includes forces to protect supply elements. Grant used a combination of forces to protect his supply lines and bases. Naval gunboats protected the transports that shipped supplies down the Mississippi River. The army cooperated with the navy by providing landing parties for these vessels. For his lines of communication on land, Grant assigned infantry, artillery, and cavalry to provide security. Since logistics elements are still vulnerable to enemy interdiction, commanders and their staffs must plan for the security of their logistics, just as Grant did.

External support also includes resources to improve logistics support, such as engineer support. The cooperation between Grant's senior quartermaster and engineer improved the logistics support for the Army of the Tennessee. The engineer troops of Grant's army built roads, bridges, and canals to ease the movement of supplies. In similar manner, cooperation between combat service support and combat support units improves the sustainment of combat forces today.

The third lesson is forward support, the heart of today's logistics doctrine. Supporting forward moves supplies as close to the tactical units as the situation permits. This allows commanders to sustain the tempo of an

operation without having to wait for supplies to be moved up from the rear. Grant pushed supplies forward throughout the Vicksburg campaign by establishing new bases from which to draw supplies. To provide responsive support, today's logisticians must plan to do the same. Otherwise, the tempo of an operation may come to a grinding halt as supplies are too far to the rear to be of any use.

The fourth lesson is flexibility of mind. The best logistician is not always the one who is able to deliver the highest tonnages. In fact, an army encumbered with too many supplies is just as bad off as an army that has no supplies. Like the tactical commander, the logistician must have the flexibility of mind to take into consideration all the available resources and to balance them with the mission in order to achieve the desired end state. Union logistics in the Vicksburg campaign was an excellent example of this type of flexibility. It is the most important logistics lesson drawn from the campaign.

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